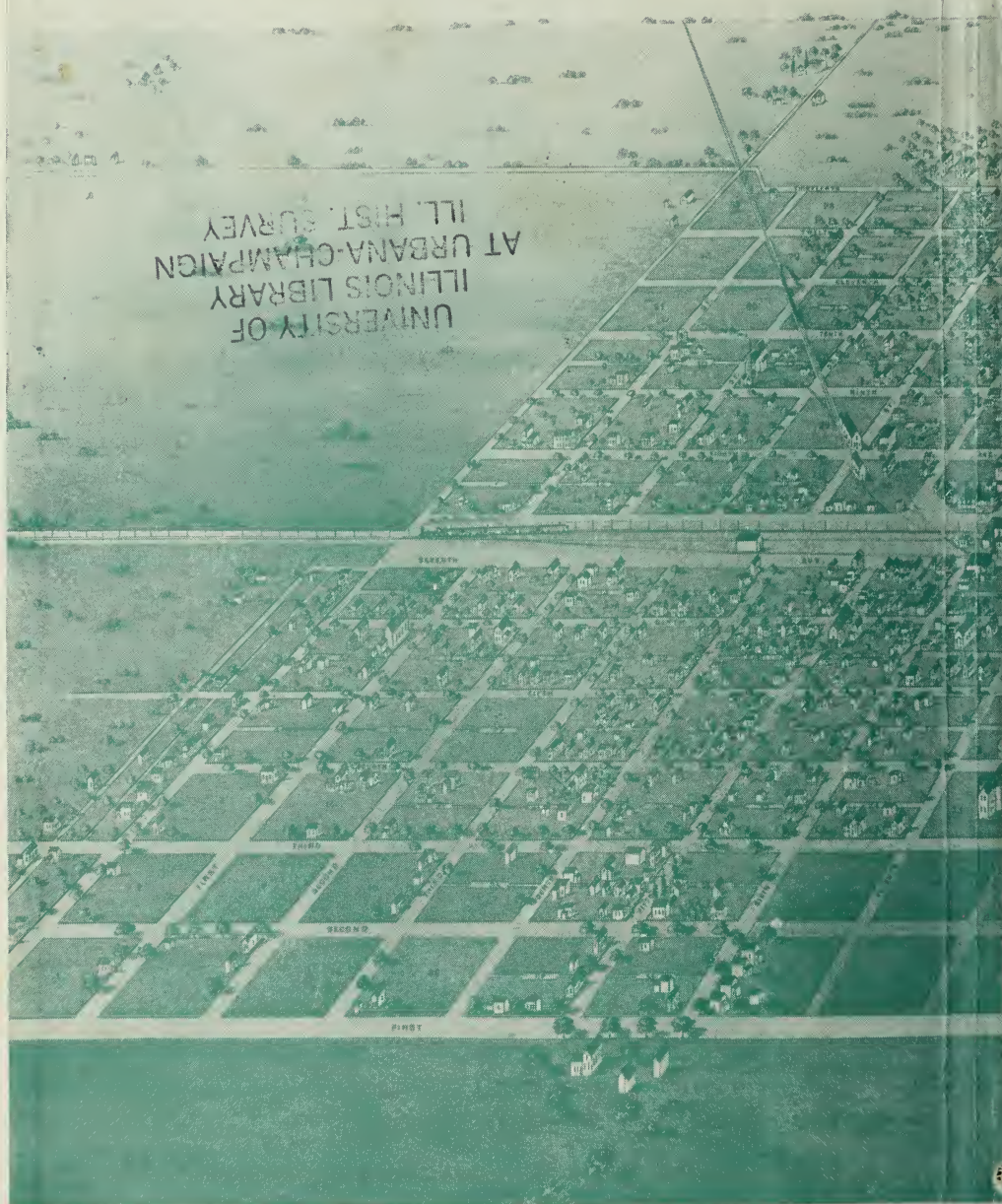




**magnificent whistle stop**



UNIVERSITY OF  
ILLINOIS LIBRARY  
AT URBANA-CHAMPAIGN  
ILL. HIST. SURVEY



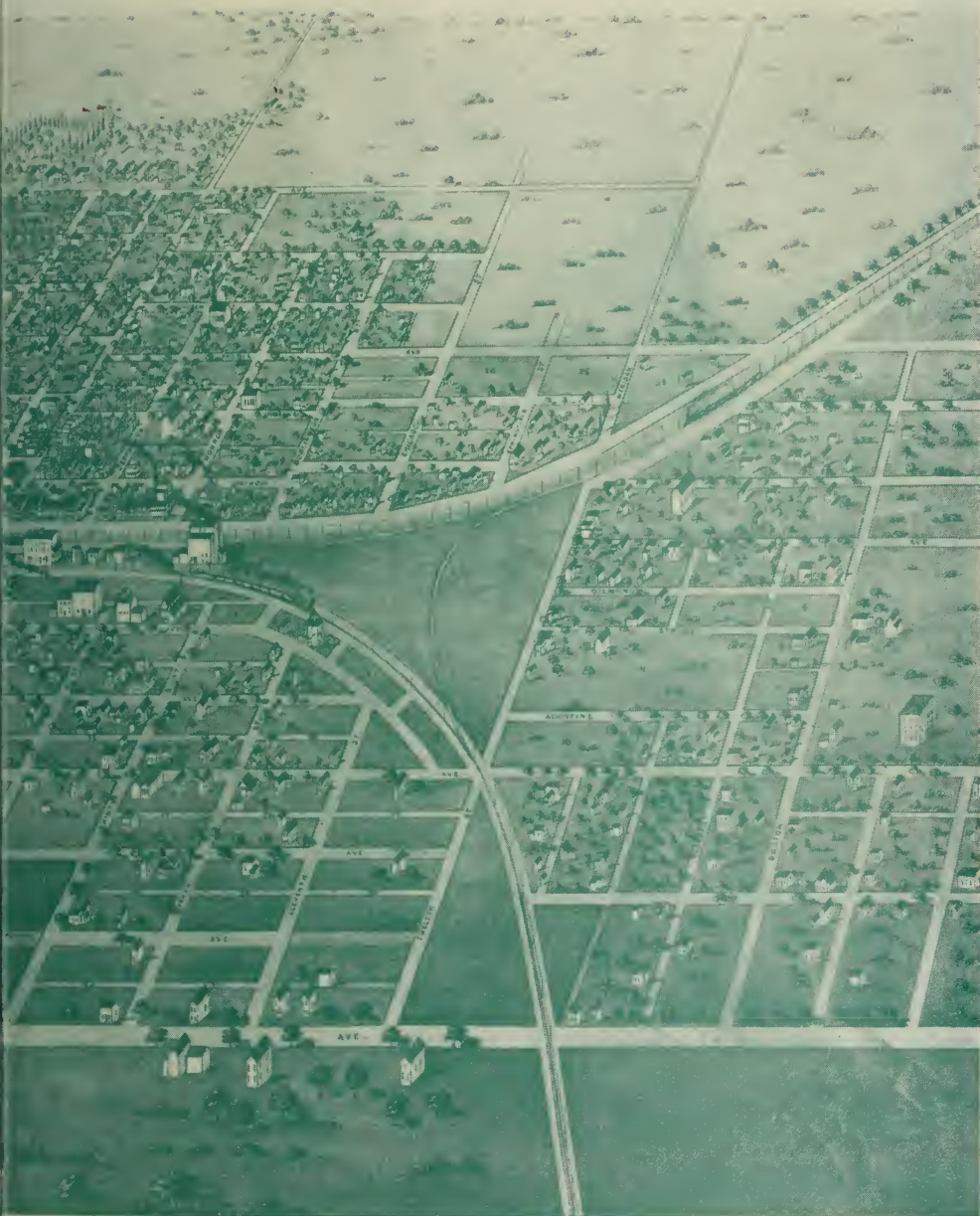
1. Buildings  
2. Trees  
3. Roads  
4. Railroads  
5. Water  
6. Other

Legend

7. Buildings  
8. Trees  
9. Roads  
10. Railroads  
11. Water  
12. Other

MEN

# ILLINOIS HISTORICAL SURVEY



OTA.

Copyright 1914 by the  
 Board of Trustees of the  
 City of Chicago  
 Printed and Published by  
 the City of Chicago  
 1914


Copyright 1914 by the  
 Board of Trustees of the  
 City of Chicago  
 Printed and Published by  
 the City of Chicago  
 1914

Copyright 1914 by the  
 Board of Trustees of the  
 City of Chicago  
 Printed and Published by  
 the City of Chicago  
 1914



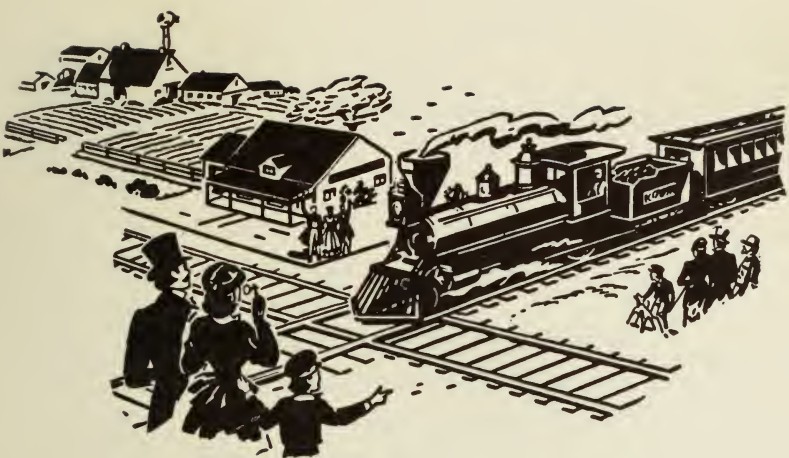


**MAGNIFICENT  
WHISTLE STOP**



Digitized by the Internet Archive  
in 2012 with funding from  
University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign





# MAGNIFICENT WHISTLE STOP

The 100-YEAR STORY  
of MENDOTA, ILL.

PUBLISHED BY  
MENDOTA CENTENNIAL COMMITTEE, Inc.

*Copyright 1953*  
THE MENDOTA CENTENNIAL COMMITTEE, Inc.

Printed in the United States of America  
for the Publishers by Wayside Press, Inc.



# CONTENTS

9	INTRODUCTION
11	DON'T YOU HEAR THE WHISTLE BLOWING?
19	FULL STEAM AHEAD: THE FIRST 50 YEARS
41	AND FOR THE PEOPLE
57	HITCHING POSTS TO PARKING METERS
77	GENTLEMEN OF THE PRESS
83	FLAMBEAUX
97	HEAVENWARD POINT THE SPIRES
119	THE MENDOTA THAT SLUMBERS
123	A LODGING FOR THE NIGHT
131	THE FOUR HORSEMEN
139	DRINK TO ME ONLY WITH THINE EYES
155	IT'S AN OLD GERMAN CUSTOM
159	EAST SIDE WEST SIDE
163	WING DING TONIGHT!
173	THE POSTMAN ALWAYS RINGS TWICE
179	BANKING IN MENDOTA
187	BLESSINGS OF CIVILIZATION
201	SOME HOT TIMES IN THE OLD TOWN
209	"IN SCHOOL DAYS"
241	TAKE ME OUT TO THE BALL GAME
261	STEADY GOETH THE MILL
287	HOW'S BUSINESS?
299	PISTOL PACKIN' PAPAS
311	COUNTRY DOCTOR
329	"AND THE WHITE CROSSES, ROW ON ROW"
347	FIRE AND FALL BACK: THE SECOND 50 YEARS
361	LOCAL BOY MAKES GOOD
387	AND NOW, ON THE FAR RIGHT!
391	BECAUSE OF YOU
571	THE HUMAN URGE

*Illustrations, 33-40; 233-240*





# FROM **W** HOM THIS BOOK

Researchers, Compilers, Editors and Writers

KENNETH B. BUTLER	GEORGE C. LIKENESS	
JEANETTE KARGER	CHARLES HENDRICK	MARIE YOST
JESSICA NASHOLD	GEORGE NISLEY	
ALMA DAVIDSON	ALICE POTTINGER	EDNA BRUCKNER
CLAUDE G. RADLEY	MRS. VIRGIL SCOTT	
GEORGE ELSESSER	MRS. EMMA MILLARD	HARRY SCHALLER
ASA SPRUNGER	LEO J. SCHWAMBERGER	
ROBERT H. RECK	WILLIAM A. RORISON	MRS. ETTA LUTZ
BERTHA KUTTER	MARGARET V. BLOTCH	
MRS. VICTOR WEDEMEYER	JAMES E. GALLAGHER	MABEL E. BROWN

Format Designed by  
THE BUTLER TYPO-DESIGN RESEARCH CENTER





# THIS IS MENDOTA

**L**OCATED MIDWAY between Chicago and Davenport to the East and West, and Rockford and Peoria to the North and South, is an agricultural and industrial community boasting a population of approximately 5,400 and an age of 100 years.

"Magnificent Whistle Stop" is the story of that city—Mendota, Illinois. It is a lusty yarn, for Mendota's history has been virile and its people have never lacked for color.

It is a tale of success and defeat, pride and humility, triumph and disaster; by turns it is gay and tragic, brazen and sedate, awe-inspiring and ludicrous.

Perhaps there is nothing singularly unique about Mendota. Its Chamber of Commerce calls it "The World's Greatest Little City", but we have no doubt that from many other "Great Little Cities" would come challenges to that. Other towns of similar size may also lay claim to more striking achievements, greater disasters, bigger this or bigger that; perhaps they are right.

What does make Mendota a "Magnificent" Whistle Stop is that its people *think* it *is* magnificent, and love it, not only for its long-established virtues, but also for its weaknesses. They pause now, at 100 years, to survey the progress of the past—but their hearts, their minds, their creative energies are aimed at the future.

This, then, is the city which was rediscovered by our small crew of 25 amateur historians.

If there ever was a labor of love, the compilation and writing of this 100-year history of Mendota is it. What seemed at first so

simple became engrossingly complicated, with time always an enemy.

This "treasure hunt" took us through hundreds of dusty files and musty records, old books and the meager existing histories of the area, and, most rewardingly, into countless conversations with those who remember "how it was when. . . ."

We owe so much to those many people who voluntarily took pen in hand to answer our appeals in *The Mendota Reporter*, or who sought out members of the committee to bring to light little-known facts, legend and lore. Unfortunately, any attempt at detailed acknowledgments would in itself fill a small book.

Unfortunately, too, this work must be imperfect. Probably it is inaccurate in spots; certainly it is not, could not be, complete, for a city is molded not only by those whose names are left blazened in type and memory but also by those who in persuasive but quiet ways have set into motion important developments, transitions, and trends.

We wish that their names might also appear here, but have finally accepted, as we know our readers will also accept, the fact that time and the inavailability of certain records make this impossible.

So much then for the how and why; on with the story. Come with us on a fast express back to 1853, when that first engine chugged into the "Magnificent Whistle Stop."

THE EDITORS

## DON'T YOU HEAR THE WHISTLE BLOWING?

**I**N 1851, MOST of Illinois was still unchartered wilderness, a vast sleeping empire of untilled prairies and uncut forests. A decade before the Indians had been the sole inhabitants; now handfuls of pioneers were stretching out into the land.

The major community in the state was Galena, where lead mines were in full swing; Chicago was only a struggling town in the swamp that bordered Lake Michigan, and hardly a likely contender for its present position as the second largest city in the nation. Elsewhere there were only a few small communities and trading posts dotted about the map.

Oddly enough, it was largely because of Galena's inaccessibility that Mendota was born two years later. Until that time, it had been necessary to service and ship from the mines by river, an unreliable and increasingly unsatisfactory mode of commercial transportation.

In 1851, the Illinois Central was chartered to build a railroad which would open the great interior of the state to development and commerce. This road bed, 705 miles in length, was to be the greatest railroad undertaking of the day. From East Dubuque, its route was to extend eastward to Galena, then south through the middle of the state to Cairo at the confluence of the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers; a secondary line was to be extended to Chicago from the main stem, branching off at Centralia.

Before work could be begun, however, it was necessary to pass

special legislation granting Government land to the railroad. Both Abraham Lincoln and Stephen A. Douglas, the great rival statesmen of the day, played important roles in the enactment of this legislation making the Illinois Central the first land grant railroad, and setting up a precedent which was to make possible in later years the great western routes to the Pacific Coast.

Actual construction of the Illinois Central was begun in 1852, with virtually all the labor and supplies imported from outside the state. Construction crews were recruited all over the world; they included ambitious Irish, English, German, Danish and Polish laborers who saw in the recruitment offer an opportunity to build new lives in a new land, rich in potential, seemingly boundless in scope. Others came from the Eastern seaboard.

Rails were shipped from the steel mills of England via New Orleans and up the Mississippi; one shipload of rails went down in a heavy storm in the Gulf of Mexico. Lumber was brought overland from Michigan.

Struggling against the elements and time, construction crews under the direction of Chief Engineer Roswell B. Mason hammered into place the 705-mile charter line, slowly but surely cutting a huge "Y" across the map of Illinois.

## THE TRAILS MEET

At the same time, another infant railroad venture, the Chicago and Aurora, a forerunner of the Chicago, Burlington and Quincy, was pushing out westward from Aurora.

In November of 1853, the tracks of the Chicago and Aurora met those of the Illinois Central, and a station was established.

The station was given an Indian name meaning "where two trails meet": Mendota.

The first Illinois Central agent was Orrin Ott, who came to Mendota a few weeks later, later to be succeeded by George Henderson.

One of the division engineers employed in the construction of the Illinois Central was T. B. Blackstone, who was later to become president of the Chicago and Alton railroad, and whose name was to be given to several Mendota landmarks.

William Cummings was a member of the Chicago and Aurora construction crew that laid tracks into Mendota. Several years later he became conductor of a local passenger train which left Mendota for Chicago at 7 a. m. and returned each evening; from its inception



until the time it was removed from service, the train was known merely as "Billy's Train."

Mendota became an important terminal immediately. Shortly after the I. C. tracks met those of the Chicago and Aurora, train service from Chicago to St. Louis was initiated—a journey taking 24 hours if all went well. A passenger would travel from St. Louis to Alton by steamboat, there boarded an Alton train which he took to Bloomington. At Bloomington he would transfer to the Illinois Central, riding as far as Mendota, then again transferring to the Chicago and Aurora. The Chicago and Aurora would carry him to Turner Junction, now West Chicago, and his final lap would be via the Chicago and Union (now the Chicago and Northwestern).

Meanwhile, a track known as the Central Military Tract was being extended westward from Mendota to Galesburg, reaching that city on December 7, 1854. This road was merged with the Chicago and Aurora line and permission was granted by the Illinois General Assembly to change the name to the Chicago, Burlington and Quincy Railroad.

On January 8, 1855, two days after the 97-mile gap between Decatur and Sandoval was completed, the first through passenger train was run over the Illinois Central from Cairo to Mendota, thence to Turner Junction via the CB&Q, and into the city over the Galena & Chicago Union (Northwestern).

Another important date in the histories of both Mendota and the Illinois Central was 1855, when the main line from Galena to Cairo was completed and two special trains, one from Galena to Cairo and another from Chicago to Cairo via Mendota carried at least 600 dignitaries to "Egypt"; for most of the passengers, it was their first view of southern Illinois.

Another date of celebration that year was June 11, when the railroad was completed to Dunleith, opposite Dubuque, Ia., on the Mississippi River. Again, special trains traveled north from Cairo through Mendota. When the Chicago branch was finished in 1856, the entire 705-mile charter line system of the Illinois Central was completed, the longest railroad in the world.

## VITTLES BY WIRE

One reason for the immediate growth of Mendota's importance was the establishment of a restaurant at the station. In those dining-car-less days when numerous trains traveled through the new com-

munity, trainmen would canvass passengers as their trains approached Mendota, asking how many wanted meals.

This information was telegraphed ahead and when the trains arrived, hot plates of food were ready to serve to the weary travelers. The meal stop was usually 30 minutes.

And railroading was rugged. The winters were unusually mild, but interspersed by sudden, crippling blizzards, prompting battles against snow and ice. Gleaned from the files of 1856 was the following report:

"Mendota: Trains from south stuck north of LaSalle . . . We are shoveling out the cuts . . . Adams went to the aid of engine and train stuck in snow at Forreston . . . his engine frozen.

"Dec. 1: Clarke is at Polo, snowbound. Engines 23, 26 and 36 are dead and road is as badly blocked as ever. Captain Wells left Amboy yesterday morning for Dixon, got into snow drift 7 miles north of there . . . Engine 20 and four cars ran off track in deep cut this side of Mendota, broke thru ice, one side settled down to the axles. Other engine attempting to come back last night became snow-bound and laid up."

But the early struggles of the Illinois Central to operate were not in vain. After the charter lines of the railroad were finished those who had been brought to Illinois to build it were encouraged to stay and settle the State. Land was sold at extremely low prices and when crops began to be harvested the railroad supplied inexpensive transportation to carry the produce to market.

Agricultural development brought new towns to Illinois and new towns brought business and eventually industries. The growth of the railroad network across the State stimulated commerce: the Illinois Central was the real pioneer which helped bring about this miracle.

## "A DESIRABLE LOCALITY"

By 1865, Mendota was, for those days at least, a large city. An Illinois Central publication of that year offered the following description:

"Mendota: 88 miles west by south of Chicago at the point where the C.B.&Q. intersects the Illinois Central. Population, upward of 3,000. The location of the place in the midst of a rich grain growing region and its railroad facilities are giving it a rapid growth and a large amount of business.

"It contains 9 dry goods stores, 16 groceries, 4 hardware and tin

stores, 3 furniture stores, and others of every variety. Two steam grain elevators, 2 flouring mills, one foundry and machine shop, one plow factory, one planing mill, three hotels, two banking houses, etc. There are seven churches of different denominations and six public schools besides Mendota College and the College Institute—both large brick edifices affording facilities for advanced education.

"The land in this vicinity is high rolling prairie, interspersed with groves of timber. There were shipped from Mendota last year on both railroads 302,930 bu. of wheat, 584,079 bu. corn, 188,833 bu. oats, 15,725 bbls. flour, besides barley, potatoes, grass seed, horses, cattle, hogs, etc.

"The class of eastern well-to-do people and Germans settling in this vicinity is making it a desirable locality."

## FIRST STRUCTURES

Mendota's first engine round house was built at the present site of the Mendota Saw Mill, and had three engine stalls. The present round house was built in 1922. The first freight house of the C.B.&Q. was also located just south of the old round house; it was a wooden structure and when abandoned was purchased by the Prescott family, moved to the farm on West Washington Street now owned by Beryl Althouse and for years used as a cattle feeding shed.

The first local depot was a wooden structure and stood a considerable distance south of the present depot. When the original structure burned in 1885, it was replaced by a large, imposing brick structure that housed ticket office, dining room, kitchen, hotel, baggage room, lunch counter, telegraph office, and express office, and was considered the largest and best equipped depot between Chicago and Omaha.

The greater portion of this building was torn down a dozen years ago, and the north end was rebuilt and refurnished into the present station.

Among the highlights of the early years of Mendota railroading are the following:

*May 16, 1863:* Railroad accident involving a mail train and an emigrant train, not far from the city, on the C.B.&Q. Six emigrants were killed; many were injured and brought to the Passenger House for treatment.

*March 2, 1871:* A royal party of Japanese emissaries, headed by an uncle of the reigning Emperor, Prince Mits Fusimi, stopped at

Mendota en route from California to Washington, D. C. They dined at the depot, and attracted "considerable attention."

*December 23, 1876:* Seven carloads of silk worm eggs packed in muscilage and valued at \$300,000, passed through Mendota en route to France from Japan.

*September 7, 1865:* Thirteen passenger cars bound for the State Fair, then at Chicago, stopped here briefly.

*September 15, 1870:* Sportsmen organized a Grand Excursion Buffalo hunt near Fort Hays, Kansas. The round trip (1,400 miles) fare was \$38.50.

*October, 1870:* The Burlington line purchased the right of way of the Western division of the Illinois Grand Trunk railway from Mendota to the Mississippi River.

*November 3, 1870:* 150 men were at work on the Mendota and Prophetstown Railroad. Pay? \$1.75 per day for laborers and \$4 per day for teams.

*August 19, 1869:* A new and elegant passenger engine, No. 144, made its first trip on the C.B.&Q. It featured the latest improved Rogers Manufacturers Drive wheels, 6½ feet in diameter.

*August 24, 1871:* The Joliet, Newark and Mendota Railroad was chartered and partly graded.

*June 8, 1871:* The newspapers carried the announcement that \$5,000 had been subscribed for stock in the Mendota and Rockford Railroad, with 150 men and 50 teams to begin work on the Rockford end.

## OTHER RAILWAY VENTURES

An early map of Mendota, made about 1875, shows a Camanche, Albany and Mendota railroad. It was indicated on the map as running west from Mendota along the township line and joining the Burlington railroad at about Fourth street. The map also shows a Joliet and Mendota railroad which ran, if the map is correct, eastward from town down the middle of Fifth street.

It is thought that these may have been projected railroads and never built as no right of way is indicated on the plat. Some preliminary grading may have been done.

Pat Simms, of the Burlington freight office, had a most remarkable memory. Lee Scott, a fellow employee, relates that Simms could, without making any written record, remember the next day the count of livestock going into a car together with number of the car, initial,



and number and kind of animals. He was never known to make a mistake.

\* \* \*

The severe cold of January, 1862, caused everything to freeze and several trains were stalled in Mendota with about 150 people. Everyone opened up their homes to take care of the stranded travelers. This nearly created a famine in town as the supply of potatoes, vegetables, and canned fruit rapidly disappeared. Mrs. Anna Herrick, a resident here at the time, recalls looking across a vacant lot and seeing seven railroad engines stalled in front of her house on the east side near the Catholic church.

## EARLY LOCOMOTIVES WERE SPEEDY

At the time of the Chicago fire (1871), locomotives had attained a speed not much less than that of today. The 126-mile trip from Bloomington to Chicago could be accomplished in two hours and ten minutes; the 89-mile journey from Bloomington to Joliet, only 80 minutes. These locomotives were the Atlantic type with two sets of drivers which produced less dynamic augment than their later heavier brothers with multiple drive wheels.

The third major railroad line to enter and stay in Mendota was the Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul. In 1903, desiring a road to tap the coal fields of LaSalle and Bureau counties, the line chartered the Rochelle and Southern division. This branch left the main line at Davis Junction, turned south through Rochelle coming into Mendota from the north and sharing I.C. trackage through the main part of town. This line was also built with the use of horses and mules as the main source of power. Elevating graders, pulled and pushed by about 20 horses and mules, sliced out the cuts and made the fills.

Joe Zolper, who at present is in charge of the construction of the Mendota Community Hospital wing, helped build the Rochelle & Southern through Mendota.

## PASSENGER PEAK ABOUT 1908

Shortly after the CM&StP was routed through the city, passenger traffic reached its peak. In 1908, the three lines combined carried 39 trains daily through Mendota.

Today, with passenger travel available through the city on the Burlington, this total has dropped to approximately a fourth of the peak figure.

\* \* \*

Named for Timothy B. Blackstone are Blackstone avenue in Chicago, the Blackstone hotel, and the Blackstone Memorial library in Chicago, which added to Blackstone designations in Mendota, perpetuate his memory.

\* \* \*

Mendota still serves the Illinois Central, however, being located on the Springfield division of the I.C., with headquarters in Clinton. The line is an important freight artery in the 6,500 mile 14-state Illinois Central system. Feed, lumber, gasoline, ties, coal, et al, travel from, to and through Mendota on the I.C., the main motive power on this division being supplied by 2100-class Mikado type locomotives.

The Illinois Central freight station, although remodeled in recent years, still serves as a bridge to the past. It served as the railroad's original station, and was the first brick building erected in Mendota. During the civil war, troops were loaded and unloaded from its platforms.

If it could talk . . .

## FULL STEAM AHEAD: THE FIRST 50 YEARS

**A**T THE END of Mendota's first half century, the city still had no paved streets, and on rainy days its citizens wallowed in the mud just as they had 50 years earlier.

Nor had any of the big industries, which were to insure Mendota's future, yet made their appearance. In many respects, the city was standing still, waiting for something to happen.

In other ways, however, the Mendota of today was well on its way to fruition in 1903. The population had reached a mark only 1,200 less than that of today, the shape and mood of the town was established. It had shaken off most of its rowdy frontier town aspects; it was ready for the planning and organization which the 20th century would bring.

When T. B. Blackstone and John W. West had come in the spring of 1853 to make a survey for the Burlington railroad, Mendota had been nothing but mud, creeks, swamps, prairie grass and cattails. A fine site for a town!

The fact, however, that this was to be the point where the tracks of the Illinois Central were to cross those of the Burlington, minimized the obstacles, and a Boston speculator purchased land in the vicinity of what is now Blackstone Park, expecting that part of the county to be a town.

He was so intrigued with the idea, in fact, that he planned a town patterned after the villages of New England. For some unknown

reason, however, perhaps a sudden change in the market value, he suddenly became apprehensive, sold his holdings and, like the Arab, "folded his tent and silently stole away."

Blackstone, on the other hand, was to exert a more solid influence on the future of Mendota. His plat, which was known as The Original Town, was filed June 25, 1853, in the recorder's office at Ottawa. A second plat called "West's Addition" was filed six weeks later.

Blackstone invested in five quarter sections; West and the Illinois Central each owned a quarter section.

The layout for the town was not particularly what could be called a masterpiece; in fact, anyone familiar with that portion of the present Mendota can testify that it is cockeyed; the streets jog in places and at the end is a piece of land not unlike a wedge of pie.

How this happened is a matter of conjecture. One story, recounted elsewhere, has it that the surveyors were roaring drunk, having partaken too strongly of a malaria-preventive known as whiskey. Another is that the muck and mud was so unpalatable that the surveyors, in their hurry to leave the area, forgot to make allowance for the curvature of the earth.

## WHAT'S IN A NAME?

The new village was first called the Junction, a not too stimulating appellation which soon gave way to the more euphonious Indian version of the same — Mendota, at the suggestion of O. N. Adams, owner of the Mendota Furnace at Galena.

An early description of the new community, obviously written by a native, reads: *Mendota is located upon a broad level prairie with scarcely a forest tree in sight, without a flowing river or picturesque landscape scenery. The town is spreading itself wonderfully for a town started upon a naked prairie away from timber without stone or other building materials handy, having no coal, water power, navigable streams or natural resources except good land and plenty of it, but Mendota has the dash of a new and growing town as well as a little of the aristocracy of an older place. She has the smartest men in the County and the handsomest women in the State.*

The first man to choose Mendota as a place to live and open a business was D. D. Guiles, a merchant from Homer (now known as Troy Grove). Guiles and others had been carefully watching the course of the railroad survey to see where the rail crossing would be made. John Joseph West (a son of John W.) furnished the means and



Guiles built the first structure in the town plat, located on Main Street in West's Addition, at the present site of the Kanteen.

A Peru carpenter, Gerhardt Yohn, a great-grandfather of the Ellingen family, was employed for the construction job. He "commuted" on foot, carrying his tools on his back. When the building was completed, George Wells joined Guiles in stocking the store and the business was opened.

Yohn was also employed to build the second house of business — a tavern, which was erected for Frank Meisenbach, the next man to make Mendota his permanent home. The tavern was utilized for the boarding of surveyors and workers on the railroad construction.

Meisenbach earned another distinction. He was the father of Ellen Meisenbach, first white child born in Mendota.

The first house, also constructed in 1853, was built on the east side of the tracks by Theo. Schiek.

Mendota's growth was rapid. The Reverend Nathan Denison, who came to Mendota from Skaneateles, N.Y., wrote to friends there in October, 1854: *I can give but a faint idea of the growth of this village since I left (Skaneateles) in July. There are more than double the buildings than when I (came) and more are erecting every day. We like it so far exceedingly well. All are welcomed with open hearts.*

Land speculation followed on the heels of the inclusion in Mendota of Rust's Addition in 1854 and the Illinois Central Addition in 1855. Was the main shopping center of this "Colossus of the Future" to be on Washington or Sixth Street?

## THE EARLY BIRD

The key to the outcome apparently lay in the creek which meandered aimlessly through the city, severing both Washington and Sixth. It became increasingly obvious that Mendota's principal thoroughfare was to be the first street bridged.

Betting odds would have favored Sixth Street. Most of the lots hereon were owned by a hard-working, hard-sleeping Englishman, ————, who was, of course, eager to have the community center in his territory, thus increasing the value of his investment.

Less industrious, perhaps, but with a shrewder sense of timing were the owners of the Washington street lots. They smoked their pipes and watched cheerfully while their English friend collected the timber for his bridge.

The night before construction was to begin and with success clear-

ly in sight, he retired late and overslept. When he awoke his timber was gone and there was a splendid new bridge across Washington Street.

\* \* \*

1854 was the year of the great cholera plague, and Mendota shared in its misery. The first victim was a stranger in town; no plans had yet been made for a burial plot so he was interred west of the city on what is now the site of the Blackstone School.

Mendota's first market was opened in the autumn of 1853 by Langdon and Douglass. The following year witnessed the opening of Dietrich Volk's brewery, the first drug store and a second meat market.

Also constructed in 1854 was the city's first flouring mill, a stone structure operated by steam. This was a milestone — for milling was of primary importance to farm communities.

\* \* \*

Fire was to prove the nemesis of Mendota milling. The original mill burned in 1865, was rebuilt and burned again in 1870. A second mill, built later by Eckert and Dewey, was also destroyed by fire, rebuilt and again burned to the ground.

The Gregg Mill, a very modern plant, was then opened and utilized until 1900 when it was dismantled and the machinery shipped to Missouri. A woolen mill built in 1866 lasted but three years; a linseed oil mill constructed by George Wells lasted only one season. A second linseed oil mill, constructed by Clark in 1870, was more successful but again fire proved fatal.

One of the most enterprising of the early merchants was S. O. Hemenway, Esq., who offered everything needed for a new home. His newspaper advertisements listed farms, lots, lumber, brick, lime, fuel, salt, and fruit trees.

The Mendota Bank of 1856 was a short-lived enterprise, but in 1860, with the population increased to 1,934, Kelsey and Price opened a bank which was to survive 11 years, and carry the community into a sounder banking era. Colonel E. A. Bowen organized the First National Bank, an institution which was to last 68 years, in 1865.

## THE BITTER YEARS



The impress of the Civil War was felt in varying degrees, as was the case in most of the small towns in the loyal states. Abe Lincoln's Illinois origin undoubtedly carried considerable weight, so also did the presence of underground railway stations in neighboring communities.

Mendota was not, however, without those expressing Copperhead sentiments, and many of those supporting the Union cause offered lip service only.

The latter feeling was perhaps the origin for the custom through which a man who did not wish to respond to the call of the colors could buy, for approximately \$100, a substitute to do his fighting. Such an arrangement was common, and was not considered the least bit dishonorable or unpatriotic.

One young Mendota farmer, not wishing to leave his newly acquired land, worked untiringly to raise the amount necessary to pay his replacement. Finally, in 1865, he had raised sufficient funds, came into town and sought out the man he had hired. The money changed hands, the would-be soldier departed and the young farmer returned to his land. The next day, news traveling slowly, Mendota learned that the war had been over three days; but the farmer saw neither the hired soldier nor his money again.

The news of the fall of Vicksburg was greeted jubilantly by the young city. The city fathers felt a celebration was in order; a large parade was organized and the thumb cannon hauled from its resting place and put on the Illinois Central platform at the head of Washington street.

Now the parade was over, the band had played, the children had waved the red, white and blue. It was time for the climax, the shooting of the thumb cannon. All was in readiness; the streets had been cleared of people so no one would be injured, the dignitaries were lined up on the platform. However, the committee had forgotten one item: they had neglected to secure a cannoneer.

What to do! The chairman climbed to the podium and asked if there was anyone in the audience who could operate a thumb cannon. A transient, in town for the celebration, answered the appeal: he could shoot the cannon and agreed to do so.

The audience was relieved; the shooting of the thumb was a must. The stranger took his place beside the weapon and placed his thumb in what he assumed to be the correct spot.

"Bang" went the shot. But the transient had miscalculated, his hand was shot off and landed where the Candy Kitchen now stands.

\* \* \*

Samuel Edwards, a resident of the 60's, was one of the town's public-spirited citizens. He owned a farm and nursery (now the Fullwood, the Dr. E. C. Cook home) just west of town and specialized in the raising of evergreens.

In 1863, Edwards offered the city \$100 worth of trees and ever-

greens for a park, and several hundred silver poplar trees for planting along the streets, provided the trees were taken immediately. The silver poplars were gladly accepted, but the park trees were refused. Mendota was not yet park-minded.

In the early 60's, land in the Mendota vicinity was selling for \$40 an acre. In 1863, Mendota counted eight new businesses in 60 days. There was not a single vacant room, nor a vacant house in the town. The town was prosperous, aggressive.

## "NO SIGNS MIT DER STREET NAMES"

It was time, too, for civic improvements. The streets were veritable mud holes; it was said that a frog resided in one of them near Andress and Scott's Implement store on Illinois Avenue.

Complaints were heard concerning the chimneys of business houses along Main Street; they were considered dangerous fire hazards. The deplorable condition of the sidewalks at the outskirts of town likewise came in for criticism.

The lack of street crossings downtown brought further complaint, but Esq. McClure busied himself in the laudable work of putting down crossings on the principal streets — Washington, Main, Monroe, Sixth, and Sixth Avenue.

In April 1866, foundations for 63 new buildings were ready and by autumn of that year 125 new houses had gone up. 1867 was another big construction year, with many of the buildings being made of brick.

The foundation for a double brick building going through from Washington to Sixth was being laid; the structure was two stories high and to have two fronts. West erected a new store building and rented it to Edwards & Sons for a stove and hardware store, an enterprise which has carried down to the Centennial year. A Mr. Starkweather opened the "Gem", a Washington street Restaurant.

Miss Kreitzer, owner of a millinery shop, was infuriated when a newcomer to Mendota had the effrontery to remark: "Mendota ish a tead von horse town no signs mit der street names, no numbers mit der store over. No notings." She complained to the city with the result that one set of street signs was erected — at the corner of Illinois and Jefferson where her shop was located.

With the completion of two new brick stores on Main Street in 1868, a continuous block ran from Washington to Jefferson. But there were still sidewalk problems, and a new walk was laid on the north



side of Washington from Illinois to Main.

Augustine's Addition, populated principally by German Lutherans, was annexed by the city. The Addition boasted a Lutheran Church and school, and a lovely park on the East side on what is now called Lincoln avenue. The park contained trees, flowering shrubs, beds of flowers and cinder paths for strolling.

Augustine began construction on a building in one end of the park; what it was to have been on completion no one knew. A basement was dug and the stones laid, then work ceased and the place allowed to return to nature. It gradually became a favorite recreation spot for children, and the site of many games of "duck on the rocks", which was played by placing a small stone on a big stone, and hurling a third stone in an attempt to displace the small one.

13th Avenue was opened one mile northward that summer; a gentleman of African descent opened a tonsorial parlor on Washington street and a genuine Indian squaw was seen on the same street selling trinkets.

While Mendota had never been a camping ground for Indians, there is reason to believe that Indian trails had crossed here prior to the coming of "civilization." Even after the settlement, Indians occasionally wandered in and out of town, traveling gypsy fashion. Ellen Meisenbach recalled how, as a small girl, she had hidden behind her mother's full skirts as Indians came to their house to beg for food.

The police believed that cleanliness was next to godliness. One vagrant wandered into town, dirty and ragged, too lazy to wash himself, and suddenly found himself hauled to the city pump and washed at city expense.

A notice of considerable interest appeared in the paper: "*At the Mendota House on Thurs. June 18 for one day only will be boys and girls from the New York Juvenile Asylum, ages 7 to 15 years. These children are to be placed in homes, until the girls are 18 and the boys 21. Under indenture.*"

\* \* \*

1869 was the year of heavy and damaging rains. The water stood four feet deep near the creek on Washington Street and many cellars were flooded. December of that year was unusually rainy with downpours lasting a week. All that rain fall jeopardized corn picking.

The Pantan Farm adjoining Blackstone School was a model Dairy Farm with a herd of 36 cows. During the summer two ton of cheese was made, bringing in an income amounting to \$600.00.

The corner of Main and Washington was a hangout for the town



loafers and a topic often discussed was "why don't the citizens of Mendota attempt to secure the Northern Illinois Insane Asylum for our city."

The women discussed the new parlor footstool. It was richly ornamented on top and concealed a spittoon. When not needed the article was covered, but the touch of a spring would disclose it in an instant. This footstool afforded a sightly compromise with a disagreeable necessity.

The ladies were trying to prohibit the use of firecrackers. They argued that horses were frightened and travelers on foot were always annoyed by careless and ill bred boys who delighted in thrusting crackers at passers-by. The ladies didn't gain their point.

In 1869 Mendota had a "cattle plague". Cows had the use of all the streets and alleys in town, and were allowed to roam at will. Some citizens tried to have the condition remedied, but it took several years to win the battle of the roaming droves of cows.

\* \* \*

And Mendota continued to grow. The Earlville Gazette reported "Mendota is the fastest growing town in the county and contains 5,000 inhabitants." The population figure was probably a little padded; the 1870 census taker found only 3,546 residents.

The destructive fires of that year were probably the work of a firebug. Prior to the \$40,000 conflagration in June, an unsuccessful attempt had been made to burn the three-story brick building known as Rust's Block, and two weeks later another attempt was discovered. If a pyromaniac was to blame, however, he was never apprehended.

As a topic for gossip, the "Battle of the Amazons" on a Sunday night in late September, replaced the curiosity over the fires. The protagonists were the respective servants of two of Mendota's ex-aldermen who lived side by side. The first girl sent her opponent to the grass and demolished her chignon with one lusty blow; before the dust cleared at least two dozen girls were involved in the set-to. The noise and confusion was reported to have "made the night hideous" to residents of the area.

Robberies were frequent. A dandy, descending from a train, was seized by two thugs and deprived of a diamond pin valued at \$450. And a notice in the newspaper read, *The party who visited my hen roost on the night of the 22nd inst. will save exposure and prosecution by depositing \$3 in the Mendota postoffice.*

\* \* \*

The following year brought Mendota's first telegraph to Chicago. It was known as the Great Western Telegraph Co., with an office located

in the same building as Jacob Miller's Tobacco Store, site of the present Pantry Grocery.

And the City Fathers now decided to buy the property on the east side of town known as the Public Square, to be used as a park. A little schoolhouse, possibly the "south School" mentioned by some historians, stood on the property and was moved. In 1872 a park committee was appointed, and Elms, Box Elders, White Ash and Soft Maple were planted. Later Rock Maple, Honey Locust, Black Walnut and Norway Pine, all from a nearby grove, were added.

\* \* \*

The City Directory of 1876 listed carpet weavers, carriage and wagon makers, blacksmiths, coopers, dress and cloak makers. One dressmaker carried a large advertisement, reading:

## ONE MOMENT LADIES

WE HAVE JUST ESTABLISHED A NEW SHOP FOR THE PURPOSE  
OF DOING ALL KINDS OF DRESSMAKING, PLAIN SEWING, ETC.  
WE WARRANT ALL OUR WORK TO GIVE PERFECT SATISFACTION.  
GOODS MADE UP IN THE LATEST STYLE AT VERY LOW PRICES.  
PLEASE CALL AND SEE US.

MISS SNODGRASS  
MRS. SMITH

Mrs. Lawrie, a rival dressmaker, not to be outdone, had this to say:

I HAVE MORE HELP WORKING FOR ME THAN HAS EVER BEEN  
EMPLOYED BY ANY ONE IN MY LINE IN THIS CITY BEFORE.  
IF YOU WISH ANY WORK DONE, I WOULD SUGGEST THAT YOU  
GIVE ME A CALL.

Also listed were 13 grocers, seven hardware stores, five tailors, ten milliners, harness shops, livery stables, and 16 saloons. Frank Dodt was a gunsmith and Anna Mulligan sold and bought human hair.

Three jewelry stores offered not only silverware and wedding rings, but also sold spectacles. If your loved one had beautiful hair, you could submit some of the lovely strands and the jeweler would have it woven into a watch chain; a woman desirous of preserving a few strands might have them patterned into ear rings or brooches.

Mrs. Barbara Margus operated a small grocery and candy store on Main Street between Burlington and Chicago, her fine selection of lemon drops, stick candy and licorice making it a haven for the younger

set. The children called her "Mother Margus", and she had a warm spot for her youthful customers. In the winter she would trade frozen quail for candy.

George Burkart, a peddler with a spring wagon, traveled about the country selling yard goods, pins, needles, laces and ribbons. Other wagons went up and down the muddy streets selling groceries, tea and coffee.

No household in these times could be without starch, the stiff bosoms of men's dress shirts and the many tiered petticoats for the women and girls making it one of the staples.

This was also a Centennial year — that of the United States — and Mendota marked the anniversary with the planting of trees. Samuel Edwards again made an offer of free trees to anyone who wished to plant during the Centennial year. The Mendota cemetery association marked the event by planting a belt of Norway Spruce around its grounds. All citizens were urged to plant; it was said that nothing would tend to beautify a prairie town more than a liberal planting of trees.

\* \* \*

Prices were rising. John Harris paid \$50 an acre for land; potatoes brought 50 cents a bushel. The popular song was "Gathering Shells from the Sea Shore."

The flying saucers of today had their antecedent that year when a large balloon descended from the skies, lighting in a field near the McIntire farm, not far from the city limits. The balloon was partly inflated but had no basket nor car attached.

For a week it was the center of attention. What was the fate of the air voyager who ascended with it? Could it have carried men from Mars, and, if so, where were they? All the more glamorous possibilities were shattered, however, when a Rockford man appeared to claim the runaway balloon. He explained that he had been preparing to sail when the balloon broke away from its fastenings and wandered away to Mendota with no passengers at all.

\* \* \*

Not until 1930 would Mendota again claim a population equal to the census reading of 1880: 4,142. It was no longer a town but a city.

Fashionable housewives now hired help to work in the kitchen or to help with the care of children. Farmers' daughters came to town to work as hired girls for a dollar a week, room and board.

Days were long; breakfast was served before 7 a.m., when the stores opened, operating until 9 p.m. Dinner (rather than lunch) was on the table at noon, supper at 6 p.m. Mornings were busy in any household; the lamps had to be washed and filled, the stoves cleaned and the nickel polished. Straw ticks and feather beds were turned and fluffed. The hired help were given the chore of cleaning the outhouses, indoor plumbing being a thing of the future.

\* \* \*

Christmas was important, then as now, and the tree played the most important role in house decoration. They were costly; this was not pine country and the trees had to be imported.

The trees were illuminated with candles stuck in small candle holders especially made for the purpose, and were placed on tables where they would be away from small hands. Gilded walnuts, popcorn roping and cookies cut in animal shapes furnished further decoration. Fire was, of course, a constant hazard, and a bucket of water and a pail of sand was placed within easy range of the tree.

The favorite gift for girls was the china doll. The dolls were usually named by the manufacturer, Ethel and Bertha being among the names found on some of these old doll heads.

An Earlville cabinet maker did a thriving business carving out doll furniture for Christmas gifts. Several examples of cradles made with spindles can still be found here in Mendota.

Saint Nick usually left sleds for the boys, and all the children received hard candy and, the finest treat of all, oranges. The latter were scarce and expensive at this time of year.

## AND LISTS OF THE WEDDING GIFTS

The increase in population brought with it the development of a social structure. Big weddings afforded an opportunity for display, and were lavishly recorded in the *Mendota Bulletin*, in which the following report was typical:

*The event in social circles that has been looked forward to with unusual interest for several weeks past, culminated last Wednesday evening in the wedding of Mr. Myron L. Bowen and Miss Kate Plummer, one of our leading society belles, which was celebrated at the residence of Col. E. A. Bowen, President of the First National Bank in this city. There was a large company in attendance to witness the ceremony, and the elegant residence was brilliantly illuminated and ornamented with rare flowers for the occasion. The ceremony that*



*made the twain one was pronounced by Rev. Mr. Haight of Chicago, after which the happy couple received the hearty congratulations of their numerous friends.*

*The supper was notable for the rare excellence and variety of the viands, and the handsome manner in which it was served.*

*While there were very many elegant toilets which did credit to the tastes of the ladies present, we have space only to mention a few. The bride was dressed in an elegant blue satin de Lyons. Bride's mother, black satin and Spanish lace. Mrs. C. H. Pixley, gold colored satin. Mrs. Dr. Corbus, elegant violet velvet, mauve satin. Miss Lizzie Scott robin's egg blue silk brocade. Miss Anna Tewksbury, blue nun's veiling, with ombre sash. Miss Carrie Marks, heliotrope nun's veiling, with white Spanish lace. Miss Belle Marks pink satin and cashmere.*

*The presents were numerous and valuable, a partial list of which we append,*

*Statue Roger's Balcony F. P. Snyder, Will Irvin, John Schuetz, Charles Madden.*

*Handsome head rest Mrs. C. H. Piley, Freeport.*

*Pair Solid Silver Jelly Spoons Mrs. F. Y. Noyes Boston.*

*Silver card stand E. D. Fischer Princeton.*

*Handsome paper weight Mrs. Fennel.*

*Ivory and white satin hand painted fan. Miss Lizzie Scott.*

*Velvet and Plate Glass Perfumery Casket D. Jack Foster Princeton.*

*\$5.00 in Gold Coin Mr. and Mrs. K. K. Olds.*

*Handsome gift in Gold Coin Col. and Mrs. E. A. Bowen.*

\* \* \*

A trial electric plant was established in 1883. The Edison Company sent out an expert to give an exhibition at the stores of Max Haass, the druggist, and Curtiss and Rude, hardware men.

1883 also brought the first telephones to Mendota. The Central Telephone Company was authorized by the city council in that year to place poles and wires in the streets and alleys of the city for the purpose of establishing a telephone system.

A lot on downtown Washington street adjoining the Warner House now sold for \$400. Illinois Avenue had three new brick buildings and it was said that it would be but a short time before that street would become one of the city's main thoroughfares.

The following editorial appeared in one of the Mendota papers:

*A poor bachelor who has been living with his brother in a miserable shanty near Perkins Grove, was brought into town last Wednesday suffering with typhoid fever. As no one could be found to take*



*care of him during his illness the poor fellow had to be taken back to his miserable hovel. He will probably die. Why cannot a city like Mendota afford a city hospital of moderate accommodations? There is hardly a village in Europe without a small hospital. As a rule Americans are far more charitable than Europeans individually but as to public charity they might still learn a good deal from folks across the water. Let us agitate the matter. Here is a good field for Christian charity.*

\* \* \*

By 1890 Mendota had 31 real estate additions but the population had dropped to 3,542. Progress, however, continued. This decade brought running water for home use; of course it wasn't piped into the dwelling but one could have a spigot out in the yard. In the winter pipes froze, but in the summer — ah! Just think! They could now set down a pail, turn the faucet and out gushed sparkling water. No more pumping at the old well in the backyard or going to the public well during those frequent dry spells when so many home owned wells ran dry.

## FIRST CEMENT SIDEWALKS

The first cement sidewalks, few in number but marvelous to see, came in 1895 and 1896. Henry Zolper, father of Joseph and B. J., laid a sidewalk around the Casper Fischer building on the corner of Main and Washington; a second stretch of walk was laid on the north side of the Lutheran Church.

A Chinese laundry was opened on the corner now occupied by the postoffice, and Mrs. Shaw maintained a hat shop in the location now serving the Anderson Bakery.

The block reaching from the State Theater to Widmer's Garage was quite unlike that of today. Hackett's livery stable extended from the creek to the Central Oil Co. corner. Northward on Illinois were a carriage factory, a blacksmith shop and finally the feeding sheds, small buildings where for ten cents per diem the farmer could "park" his team.

Mr. Wershinski operated a large drygoods store in the present location of Yohns. Julia Kohl was *the* fashionable dressmaker; brides and girls going away to school had to have clothes by Miss Kohl. Other customers came from as far as Chicago.

Dress making was a big job; Miss Kohl employed a dozen girls,

some of them apprentices learning the trade. The client would select a design, and the first step was the drafting of a pattern which necessitated taking the customer's measurements, always a ticklish job. Each gown was custom made and required numerous fittings. Dresses were lined, skirts were stiffened with crinoline and heavy linen. Each skirt had a brush braid to protect it from the first dirt of the street.

The First National Bank now sought the accounts of the ladies, and advertised: *Ladies accounts are too often neglected; their cash is retained at home and put in some secret place, the security of which is doubtful. The First National Bank solicits the deposits from women. Special attention will be given their business requirements.*

\* \* \*

The turn of the century found Mendota with a population of 3,736, and a burning question for discussion in the cigar stores, ladies whist and flinch clubs: Does the century turn in 1900 or 1901?

\$1.50 would buy a pair of boy's shoes at Posts' Shoe Store on Illinois Avenue. Advent Camp Meetings were held on Mendota's college grounds. Snyder's Grove was the favored spot for church picnics. Pantries were standard equipment and always mentioned when dwellings were put up for sale.

## A VERY FRANK ADVERTISEMENT

One enterprising merchant, Max Johns of North Main, advertised another essential: bed bug killer.

*Did you say bed bug killer? Yes, we have it, sure thing. Now we realize people do not like to ask for it. 'Fraid we will think they are bug house. We have arranged some bottles on the show case. All you have to do is drop your money (25c) to attract attention take a bottle and walk out. There will be no questions asked.*

But now, with 50 years under her belt, the city turned to the meeting of a problem which had been with her since birth: the streets.

The argument that held up street paving was, "Who is going to pay for this improvement?" Finally it was ruled that paving was a private enterprise and the cost up to the property owner, the same as paying for a coat of paint on a store front. Just or unjust, it was the law.

The declining population worried others. It was said that it was time Mendota woke up a bit if she expected to hold her own: *Paved streets and a new hotel are our most pressing needs just now. After we get these, we will let you rest a while.*





WASHINGTON STREET, 1871. Stores had wooden awnings and wooden sidewalks. The street was dirt with brick crosswalks. Hitching posts lined the sidewalks and wagons were the means of hauling supplies out to the farms.

A PRIZE-WINNING DECORATED CAR in a parade held about 1916. The driver is Grover Sunday, and the ladies, who wore purple hats, are Mrs. Robert Hallenberg, Aimee Madden, and Mrs. D. C. Haskell who designed the float.



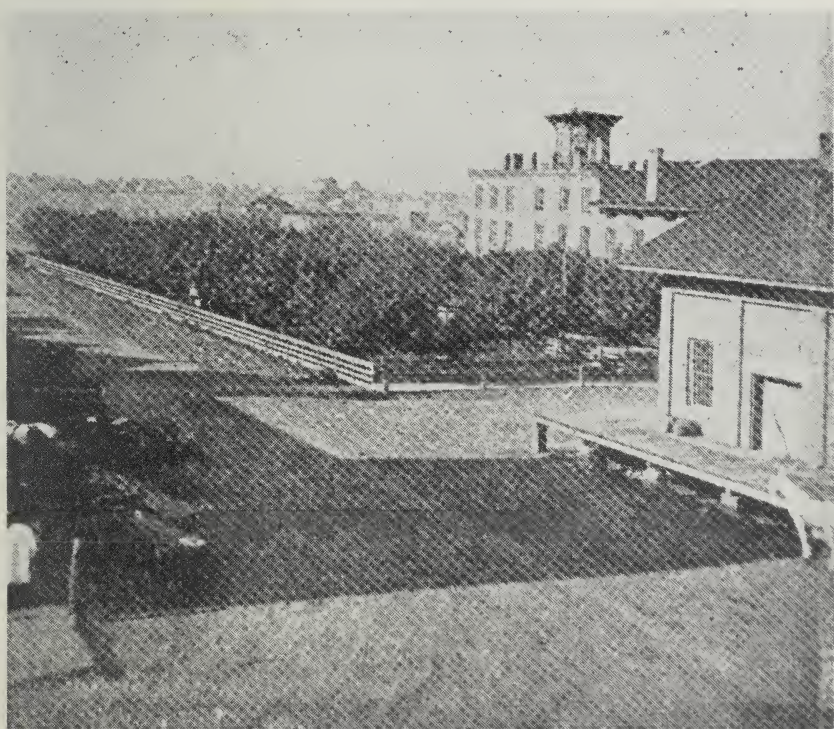






FOUR MENDOTA BANKERS, taken about 1925. They are, left to right, Dan C. Haskell, Frederick Haskell Jr., R. N. Crawford, and A. A. Landgraf.

MAIN AND WASHINGTON streets with the first passenger house shown in the distance. Note the fenced and landscaped depot grounds. The Illinois Central freight depot, still standing, appears in the right foreground.







THIS WAS THE OLD First National Bank as it looked in October of 1895. Standing in the doorway are two assistant cashiers, R. N. Crawford at the left, and Fred H. Haskell Jr. at the right. The small sign in the window reads "F. Gifford, notary public." The bank was rebuilt in 1915 when the present stone front was erected and the building doubled in size. It is now the home of the First State Bank. Note that Schuetz and Denison, druggists, were located next door. The horse seems interested in the proceedings.

AN EARLY SCENE inside the Tower Cultivator factory on route 34, now occupied by H. D. Hume Company. It shows the primitive type of machines and belt-operated power lines. Ollie Friestad, at left, was foreman. Note the derby hats.





THE MEMBERS OF THE MENDOTA HOSE COMPANY lined up in front of the old fire station in 1899. The fire station and city hall was then located in the library park, facing west. Wagon factory in background was on present site of postoffice. Members of the company, identified by number, were as follows: 1. J. G. Reul, chief; 2. N. J. Riegel, foreman hose; 3. F. W. Henning, assistant foreman hose; 4. Henry Roth, secretary; 5. John Full, treasurer; 6. Harry Boslough, driver; 7. Frank Schmitt Jr., driver; 8. Theo. Etzbach, babcock; 9. John Faber, babcock; 10. Fred Oester, plugman; 11. M. Elssesser, pipeman; 12. William Hensler, pipeman; 13. H. Reckinger, pipeman; 14. Max John Jr., pipeman; 15. Aug. Ziebarth, hoseman; 16. John N. Knauer, hoseman; 17. Albert Koch, hoseman; 18. Casper Frey, foreman hook and ladder; 19. Henry Wiese, h and l; 20. Fred Hoerner, h and l; 21. Frank Schmitt Sr., h and l; 22. George Geyer, h and l; 23. F. J. Schwarz, h and l; 24. John Pohl, axman; 25. John Schaller, axman.

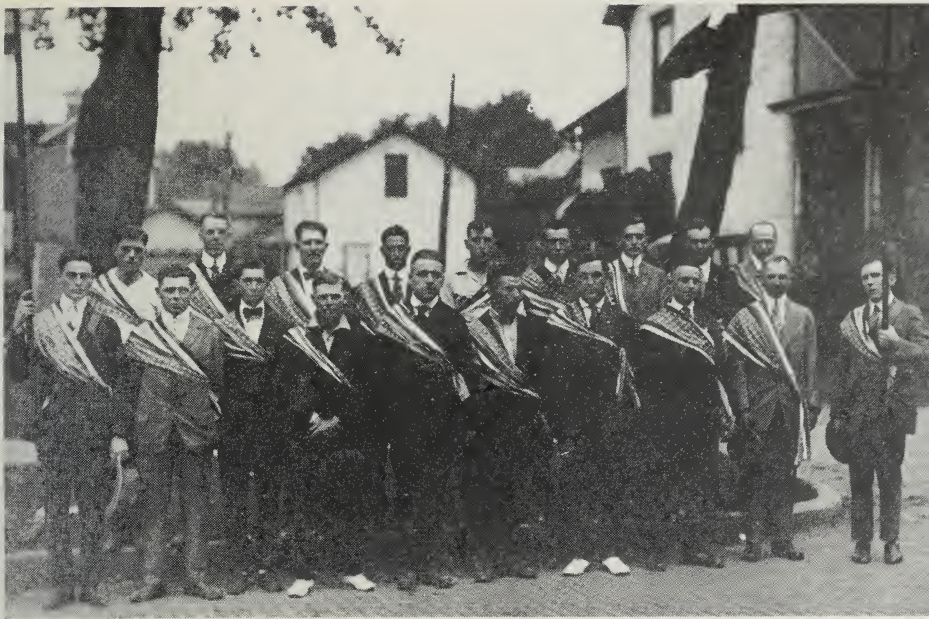




MENDOTA BEER became famous far and wide, as shown by this photo taken in Palatine, Illinois, in 1870. This community is located northwest of Chicago, many miles away. The picture shows the Mendota beer sign on the signboard of the Annex Hotel. (Photo courtesy Palatine Enterprise.)

VIEW OF MAIN STREET, showing Evangelical church spire in the distance. This picture was taken in 1867. Note young trees in foreground, long since removed. In far background, left, note old Blackstone school.





THE FIRST CONTINGENT of Mendota young men to leave for military service at the outbreak of World War I. Hundreds more followed in their wake as the nation mobilized in the war to preserve democracy.



HARRY BURRIGHT, Mendota boy and member of the famous harness racing Burrights, shown with Jerry Hanover, famous racing trotter who has a record of 2:06.





A PROUD EARLY AUTOMOBILE, taken on a dirt road on what is now highway 51 near Mendota lake. The year was 1907 and seated in the Jackson phaeton are Carl Yost, driver, Fred Yost and John Yost. In the background is the old ice house.

TRANSPORTATION in the early days. Mrs. Claude Radley is seated in the Radley's 1903 single-cylinder chain drive Reo with a friend from Aurora. Her nephew is standing beside the car. Picture taken on Boozle's bridge, crossing Indian creek, near Earlville.





## . . . AND FOR THE PEOPLE

**H**AD THE YOUNG CITY continued to observe its original set of ordinances, life in Mendota today would follow a markedly different pattern.

The first set of governing ordinances, adopted July 4, 1885, by the Board of Trustees, set down the following regulations:

1. *That no license for the sale of intoxicating spirituous or mixed liquors shall be granted within this corporation.*
2. *That all persons engaged in assaults and batteries and affrays within the limits of this corporation shall be prosecuted and such punishment shall be inflicted and such fine be assessed as is provided by the Laws of the State.*
3. *That all persons riding, driving, racing or trying the speed of horses or other animals within the corporation at a dangerous speed shall upon conviction be fined five dollars and costs of prosecution.*
4. *That any person keeping open any tippling house or grocery on the Sabbath Day shall be fined twenty dollars for each offense.*
5. *That there shall be no slaughtering or killing of cattle, hogs, or sheep done within the limits of this corporation between the first of April and the first of November of each year. Any person violating this section of this ordinance shall upon conviction be fined five dollars for each offense.*

6. *That any person keeping open any tippling house, dram shop, gaming house, bawdy or other disorderly house shall be fined ten dollars for each day the same shall be kept open.*
7. *That any person gambling in any public or private house within the limits of the corporation shall upon conviction be fined ten dollars for each offense."*

The settlement that rapidly became the City of Mendota had its beginning as early as 1850 in what was then the Township of Meriden. Meriden Township as originally organized in the year 1850 included what is now Mendota Township, not separately organized until 1856.

It became generally known in the spring of 1853 that the junction of the Illinois Central Railroad and the Chicago, Burlington & Quincy Railroad would be at the little settlement known as Mendota. By the fall of 1853 both of these railroads maintained an office in Mendota. In this same year the Illinois Central Railroad platted into lots and blocks that part of the city known as the Illinois Central Addition to the City of Mendota. Timothy B. Blackstone platted what is known as the original Town of Mendota.

## CORPORATE ORGANIZATION

The settlement grew rapidly and the first record of a corporate organization of the village as a separate political subdivision is June 28, 1855. In the early part of 1855 the people of the settlement complied with the requirements of a general act of incorporation passed some years earlier by the Illinois legislature, and incorporated the settlement as a separate political subdivision.

An election was held in early June, 1855, at which were elected five trustees of the Town of Mendota. The minutes of the first meeting of this Board of Trustees commences: *At a meeting of the trustees elect of the corporation of the town of Mendota—Present: J. H. Adams, Samson Lamb, U. P. Golliday, C. M. Johnson, D. G. Bly.* This first meeting was adjourned after electing J. H. Adams President of the Board of Trustees. At a subsequent meeting on July 6, 1855 the Board defined the boundaries of the town as the boundaries of Section 33, Township 36 N. Range 1 East of the Third Principal Meridian. For rules of order the Board adopted the Jefferson Manual.

Much remained to be done to start the new town functioning. Sources of income were needed to finance the government of the new town and the Board of Trustees met frequently. On July 10, 1855

the first tax ordinance was adopted by the Board. It read as follows:

*Ordered that a tax be levied and collected on all showmen and juglers as follows, viz., that all menageries and circuses pay ten dollars each, also that all smaller shows and juglers pay five dollars each.*

The Board of Trustees passed many additional ordinances during the next three months, including one providing for the levying of a tax on all real and personal property at a rate of 30 cents for every \$100 valuation.

Another interesting ordinance passed at this time required all persons over 21 and under 50 years of age residing within the limits of the corporation to work three days a year on the streets and roads as a "Poll Tax". Apparently disfranchisement was not sufficient inducement to get the necessary work done because within a year this ordinance was superseded by one requiring all males over 21 and under 60 years of age to work three days per year on the streets or be subject to a fine of three dollars plus the costs of prosecution.

By the fall of 1855 sufficient funds had accumulated in the town treasury to enable the Board to adopt an ordinance providing for a local improvement, part of the cost of which was to be borne by the town. The improvement consisted of a plank sidewalk six feet wide along the west side of Main Street, extending from Monroe Street to Washington Street. Property owners were assessed at the rate of 45 cents per front foot for their share of the cost.

This same year the Board allocated town funds for the sinking of two public wells. The specifications provided the wells were to be of sufficient depth to afford an ample supply of water at all times. They were to be walled with stone at least a foot thick and to have an inner diameter of at least six feet. The tops of the wells were to be covered with plank and suitable pumps installed therein. The work was done by contract and the first two wells located on the east side of Illinois Avenue at Washington, and the north side of Sixth Street just east of the C. B. & Q. tracks.

A town seal was purchased in December, 1855, the impression being that of a flying bird and a field view surrounded by the words "CORPORATE SEAL OF THE TOWN OF MENDOTA".

Even with these expenditures the town treasury must not have been entirely depleted, for in the spring of 1857 the Board of Trustees had the audacity to pass an ordinance providing compensation for themselves in the amount of \$1.00 per meeting.

Under the town organization the Trustees were elected for a term of one year. There was a substantial change in the membership of

the Board of Trustees in 1857. The Board elect that year consisted of I. B. McFarland, John Phillips, D. G. Bly, George Woods, and James Kenworthy, the latter being chosen president. C. H. Gilman, one of Mendota's first lawyers, was appointed clerk for the Board of Trustees. He later became the first town attorney. A new office, that of Police Magistrate, appeared on the ballot at this election. Levi Kelsey was elected to this position.

## IT'S THE LAW!

Within the year the liquor ordinance was amended to permit the Board of Trustees to issue liquor licenses to such persons as they deemed fit. The license fee was \$100 per year and the license could be revoked at the discretion of the Board of Trustees at any time, in which case the fee was forfeited. With the return of intoxicating beverages the Board lost no time in providing for heavy fines for persons found intoxicated and also provided that such fines could be worked out at the rate of \$1.00 per day laboring on the streets of the town.

Another ordinance of this era provided for the regulation and licensing of bowling alleys. This ordinance originally covered the game of "ten pins". Possibly some enterprising gentleman painted an extra pin on his alley and called the game "eleven pins" in order to escape the effect of this regulation because the ordinance was amended to include "all pin alleys from one to twenty pins".

By 1859 the town found itself in need of a jail. Plans for a new "calaboose" were examined and accepted at a meeting of the Town Board of May 6 of that year. A contract for building the "calaboose" on the site of the present City Hall was awarded and construction completed several months later. After a short consultation with their dietician the Trustees decided that bread and water twice a day would be an adequate diet for all prisoners lodged therein and it was so ordained.

After the calaboose was completed it became the meeting place for the Town Board for a number of years. It was also the official polling place for all subsequent town elections.

Improvements came rapidly in the next few years. A plank crossing had been established over the railroads at Sixth Street in 1856, and in the year 1864 a similar crossing was ordered established at Eighth Street. Several miles of plank sidewalk were laid in and around the business district.



The town authorized and paid for no less than 25 additional public wells in the next fifteen years. In these early days there were no storm or sanitary sewers in the town and the Trustees frequently appropriated money for the construction of numerous drainage ditches along the town streets. Not until 1870 did the city begin to lay drainage tile along the edges of the more heavily travelled streets.

Dog owners had their troubles even in those days. An ordinance passed May 6, 1859, required an annual license fee of \$2 for each dog. It also provided that between May 1 and October 1 of each year the owners of dogs were required to "put a sufficient muzzle upon the nose of such dogs when running at large to prevent biting." It further provided that any dog found running at large without a muzzle between the aforesaid dates might be killed on sight by any person, and the owner was declared to have forfeited any right to sue for the loss of the dog.

In February of 1859 the Illinois legislature passed a special act incorporating the Town of Mendota. As previously stated, the town was first incorporated in the year 1855 under a general act of incorporation. The act of 1859 increased to some extent the powers of the Board of Trustees and specifically designated the qualifications and duties of the Trustees and other town officers.

It is strange, however, that nowhere in the minutes of the meetings of the Town Board through the year 1859 is there any record of mention having been made of this special act to incorporate the Town of Mendota. Possibly the Trustees were unaware of its passage or perhaps they did not deem it of sufficient importance to warrant official mention, as for some while they had been exercising most of the powers granted them under this act.

On February 26, 1860, a committee presented a petition to the Town Board asking them to establish a fire company and to furnish said company with such apparatus as they deemed necessary for the effective extinguishment of fires. A committee was appointed to ascertain the cost of buckets, hooks and ladders. On November 30, 1860 a fire "engine" was purchased in St. Louis, Missouri at a cost of \$400. The records do not show what type of "engine" this was but it is believed to have consisted of a hand operated pump. In April 1862 a contract was awarded for the building of a ladder cart and a hook and ladder house for the newly established fire brigade.

In the fall of 1866 the Town Board was petitioned by a group of citizens to erect street lamps in certain specified locations. The petition was rejected, apparently on the theory that street lights were



an unnecessary luxury and town funds could be more properly spent for other purposes.

On November 1, 1866, the Town Board appointed a committee to inquire into the possibility of incorporating the town as a city and to draw up a city charter. The members of this committee were J. L. Watkins, J. O. Lathrop, William Wirick and John McGinnis. At the meeting of January 10, 1867 the city charter prepared by this committee was presented to and approved by the Town Board.

The charter was granted by the State Legislature in February and a special election was held at the calaboose on March 4, 1867, at which 238 people voted for and 64 against the adoption of the charter as passed by the Legislature. At a meeting of March 11, 1867 the Town Board divided the city into four wards and arrangements were made for a city election.

This election was held April 9, 1867. The Town Board of Trustees met three days later and canvassed the election returns of the various wards. They announced the election of the following persons: *Mayor*, Boyd Lowe; *City Clerk*, George Guy; *City Marshal*, Thomas Forrestall; *Treasurer*, E. A. Bowen; *Attorney*, D. A. Cook; *Assessor*, D. Y. Loud; *Supervisor of Streets*, Jacob Nisley; *Aldermen, 1st Ward*, William Wirick, George M. Price, Frank Meisenbach; *Aldermen, 2nd Ward*, E. A. Bowen, William Van Vleit, F. Jewell; *Aldermen, 3rd Ward*, J. W. Edwards, Perley Stone, Patrick Dunn; *Aldermen, 4th Ward*, John Gilmore, G. N. Jones, J. M. Hall. This was the last official act of the Town Board and they then adjourned leaving in their stead a city form of government.

\* \* \*

The first city council meeting was held April 27, 1867. Rules of Order were adopted and committees appointed. Each ward was to have one alderman coming up for election each year. Therefore, the aldermen from the various wards drew lots to determine whether they would hold office for a one, two or three year term. All aldermen subsequently elected would hold office for a full three year term. It was decided that regular meetings would be held on the second Monday of each month. A new city seal was adopted. On October 8, the council appropriated funds for the opening and grading of Thirteenth Avenue from Washington Street northward to the city limits. The Mayor's salary was fixed by the council at \$250 per year. In 1869 this was raised to \$400.

In the council meeting of June 6, 1870 the question of street lights was again raised. A petition signed by numerous citizens and businessmen was read requesting the erection of street lamps to be

lighted with gasoline at various places in the business district of the city. The petition stated that a new type of gasoline burner could be kept lighted at a cost of 5 cents per night.

Another petition by the businessmen directed to the council was then read. It requested that the salary of the city marshal be raised from \$60 to \$75 per month. It was then suggested by one of the aldermen that the city would be glad to increase the salary of the city marshal if the petitioners desiring the increase would contribute the funds from which the same could be paid. (*With street lights and an increase in the marshal's salary being desired by the businessmen, it seems possible the city might have been experiencing a wave of vandalism.*) The council however seemed to have more weighty matters to deal with than these petitions, and a motion to postpone indefinitely further discussion of them was made and carried.

\* \* \*

Even though one of the aldermen had only recently remarked, after some repairs to the calaboose had been completed, that "it was good enough for a drunken man or any other man", the council seemed to be of the opinion that a body of their dignity should have a more stately meeting place. Accordingly, in 1871, (Blackstone School having been completed) they purchased for use as a City Hall the old west side school building and site for the sum of \$3,500. The site of the old school is now part of our Library Park.

\* \* \*

Patrick Dunn was a notable alderman from the third ward. No one ever thought of running against him. He made one unique proposition to the city council, namely, that the town should excavate a series of canals and furnish them with gondolas for recreational purposes. His idea died aborning.

## THE ARTESIAN WELL FIASCO

The City Council was approached several times in 1870 and early 1871 by groups of citizens requesting the building of cisterns in various parts of the town to aid in the extinguishment of fires. There was also some discussion of what was referred to in the minutes of the council proceedings as an "Artesian" well, but no action of any sort was taken. However, when the council met on October 9, 1871 the embers of the great Chicago fire were still smoldering. After some discussion as to what should be done in the way of aid to the

people of Chicago the heretofore sadly neglected fire brigade received top priority.

One of the aldermen moved that the Marshal and Supervisor be directed to remove all hay, straw stacks and other combustible material located within the city in such places to endanger property in the event of fire. Twenty-four hours notice for such removal was given to the owners of dangerously placed straw stacks, et cetera, and the Marshal and Supervisor were instructed to remove the same if the owners failed to do so.

On November 6, 1871 a commission was appointed to determine the cost of laying a water main from the Illinois Central water tank to a proposed fire hydrant to be located on Main Street. Several additional wells were ordered dug in various parts of the city and an ordinance establishing a fire department consisting of a fire marshal, one foreman, one assistant foreman, fire engine men, horse men, hook and ladder men and axe men was adopted.

If the newly organized and newly equipped fire department was to be effective in fighting fires an ample supply of water was a necessity.

As nearly as can be determined, the first deep well in the community, the famous Artesian well at Sixth street and Main, on Delaney's corner was begun as a commercial venture, for general exploratory purpose, in the hope of striking coal or oil, with water a secondary consideration. The Artesian Water & Coal company, sponsors of the enterprise, was organized in February, 1873, with 100 shares of stock sold at \$25 per share. The next month a committee of the shareholders, M. A. McKey, Col. E. A. Bowen, Dr. E. P. Cook, L. Marks, G. A. Kellenberger, Jr., S. A. Rogers, D. D. Guiles and S. Arnold undertook the selection of a site for the well.

The history of the company and how the artesian well finally became a municipal project is of some interest, since it absorbed our efforts to secure a water supply for over 15 years. Following is a brief chronology of activity during 1873, as appearing in the local press of the period:

May 16, 1873. The Big Bore Progresses. Frame pyramid 50 feet high for derrick. If subscribers wish to see work pushed forward promptly they must be prompt in meeting their assessments. Being rigged to penetrate 600 feet if necessary.

June 27, 1873. Artesian Well at a depth of 145 feet now in blue clay strata.

July 11, 1873. At 170 feet passed nine inch vein of coal — now at 180 feet. Drill at 200 boring through sand rock. Eight horse power

steam engine is inadequate. City votes to donate steam engine of sufficient power.

July 18, 1873. New steam engine bought by city for use of Artesian Well company is a brand new 15-horse portable and cost \$1140. Purchased in Chicago and shipped yesterday.

August 1, 1873. Work on artesian well not yet resumed since parting of cable leaving drill at bottom of bore, which occurred about two weeks ago.

August 8, 1873. Artesian well in status quo. A jarrer and other tools have been secured and contractor is confident he will have a big drill raised and working again in few days.

August 29, 1873. Notice of meeting to friends and subscribers to Artesian Water & Coal Fund, August 21, Cooper's Hall, to decide whether to abandon enterprise or commence new well. Signed by Bowen and McKey.

September 5, 1873. Last Monday heavy iron drill, nearly 40 feet long, was successfully grappled and hoisted out. A large crowd assembled and when it was safely secured above ground a hearty cheer rent the air. Acting on impulse, someone passed around a hat and took up a donation to be presented to the indefatigable and plucky contractor and nearly \$50 was thus raised. With a new cable and new engine on the way from Buffalo, will now progress steadily downward.

September 26, 1873. Artesian well again at a standstill. Gravel fallen in through broken tubing has submerged drill which is fast in bottom.

October 10, 1873. Mendota Artesian Well & Coal company ceased work and are to go into liquidation. Proposed to collect unpaid subscriptions and tender machinery, tools and fixtures to city as a gift.

At a special meeting of City Council, resolved to bore well at public expense if ratified at special election October 20.

October 24, 1873. Result of special election October 20:

For Artesian Well ..... 246

Against ..... 99

Council to advertise for bids.

November 28, 1873. Contract for boring well awarded by city to McDougal & Joyce of Petrolia, Canada, who agree to bore well of 1,000 feet at \$3.75 per foot. Will buy engine from city and pay \$100 for lumber in derrick and shanty now on grounds.

It is strange that in the course of 1,000 feet of drilling no water suitable to the taste of the council was encountered. That seems to have been the case however and the council decided to increase the depth of the well to 1,200 feet. After this depth was reached there was still



nothing favorable to report and on March 9, the city council conferred with a geologist with respect to sinking the well still deeper. Perhaps they began to have visions of oil, for a month later they voted to increase the depth of the well to 1,600 feet.

During the next three or four weeks the drilling continued at a frenzied pace. The machinery was not even slowed down upon reaching 1,600 feet but the work proceeded until the well had been sunk to a depth of 2,000 feet.

With no satisfactory water being found at this depth the council apparently became somewhat concerned and did not care to have the responsibility of determining whether the well should be abandoned or drilled still deeper. A city election was held on June 8 in which 127 people voted for drilling to a depth of 2,300 feet and 95 were against proceeding any further. Whether the drilling was again commenced immediately after this election does not appear in the minutes of the proceedings of the council. It is known, however, that sometime during the next year the depth of the well was increased at least 150 feet.

By this time nearly \$13,000 had been spent and no suitable water vein had been encountered. This fact undoubtedly was a source of great irritation to the taxpayers as well as to the city council—so much so that no further mention of the well appears in the minutes until June 3, 1876, when the Mayor stated that the well had been temporarily capped, had been reopened and water found standing 36 feet below the surface. The Mayor proposed to erect a pump and test the quality and quantity of the water. Water was pumped from the well for many hours without any apparent decrease in its level.

A subsequent analysis of the water showed that it contained among other things "calcium, magnesia, alunina, protoxide of iron and sodium chloride". It also stated that the water had "cathartic properties and a saline, but not disagreeable taste."

## WATER, WATER EVERYWHERE

With this report apparently most people tried to forget the entire fiasco, but the sentiment of at least one party was expressed in a letter published in a local paper soon after the city council had purchased a cannon for the sum of \$160. After mentioning this purchase the letter continued—*Now if the city dads will just take that old cannon and plant its muzzle pointing towards heaven in the top of our \$13,000 Artesian well-hole it will be an appropriate climax and fitting monument*



*to remind future generations of the bountiful beneficence of the aldermen of the present generation!"* Signed, "A Tax Payer".

In 1880 a hole about 20 feet deep was dug around the Artesian well piping and lined with stone. A pump and steam engine were installed at the bottom. An article in the Mendota paper noted "the male population of Mendota is becoming hump-backed from looking down the Artesian well-hole to see the steam pump work". This article also referred to the well as being 2,200 feet deep, having cost \$15,000 to date, and yielding water too warm and tasteless for drinking.

On September 11, 1880 the committee on the Artesian well made this brief report, "It is finished!" Whether this report referred to the well or to the committee is not known, probably both, as neither was ever again referred to in the minutes of the council.

\* \* \*

In April, 1882, notwithstanding the costly and ill-fated Artesian well venture, the City Council, faced with an ever increasing need for a city water system, embarked upon a water works project. In an election held June 1, the populace voted for the establishment of a water works; plans and specifications were adopted two months later. In September of 1883, work was commenced on a well at the location of the present water works buildings and an adequate vein of water found at a depth of about 450 feet.

"The Mayor and water commission" journeyed to Chicago to purchase pipes for the water mains, at a cost of \$34 per ton. Fire hydrants were installed at frequent intervals as the mains were laid. Workers laying the water mains were paid \$1.25 a day. The original installations, including a steam pump, water tower or stand pipe and a cottage for a water works attendant were completed about 1886.

Construction of a more adequate water works building was commenced in 1888 and in 1889 an ordinance on water rates was passed and the first public drinking fountain was erected at the corner of Main and Washington Streets in July of that year. A statement published in May of 1890 showed that  $1\frac{7}{8}$  miles of water mains had been laid in the past year and that there were 43 fire hydrants in the city at this time. During the remainder of the year several thousand feet of additional water mains were laid in the first ward. The city in that year agreed to furnish water for the engines of the Burlington railroad at a rate of 6 cents per 1,000 gallons.

A second water works well was commenced in the fall of 1891. This well was completed the following spring and a new steam pump with a capacity of 180 gallons per minute was installed. By May 1, 1892, the city had 8 miles of water mains, 65 fire hydrants, 8 public

drinking fountains and about 250 water customers. \$51,000 had been spent on the water system as of that date. During the next five years the city acquired an additional 5 miles of water mains and the number of consumers more than doubled.

\* \* \*

In 1874 Messrs. Darlington and Turnbolt were authorized to establish Mendota's first gas plant. One and one-quarter miles of gas pipes were installed on the west side of the city that fall. In December of that year Mendota's first gas lights were installed in the City Hall, and the council voted to install gas street lights in various places throughout the business district, including the railroad crossing.

Additional street lamps were authorized in the years immediately following, and in January 1884 their number was sufficient to warrant the hiring of an official lamp lighter who was salaried at \$10 per month. The gas lamps were lighted after sunset and extinguished at 11 p.m.

In 1883 the first electric light ordinance was adopted, authorizing Lewis R. Curtis, Max A. Haass, David Rude and Frank P. Snyder of Mendota, Illinois, and their associates, to construct and operate an electric plant for the purpose of furnishing light and power to the City of Mendota. A steam generating plant was constructed east of the Illinois Central Railroad about a block north of the business district.

The first electric street lights, consisting of 21 16-candle power lamps which were lighted from one-half hour after sunset until midnight, were installed in the summer of 1889. The first electric fire alarm system was installed in 1897 at a cost of approximately \$1800. In 1901 a light was placed on top of the water tower.

## DOWN FOR THE COUNT

The year 1925 saw the installation of a traffic light in the center of the intersection of Washington Street and Thirteenth Avenue. The hazardous location of the light post resulted in it being frequently damaged by passing vehicles. After a particularly hard knock a few years later the council decided to remove the signal rather than repair it again.

\* \* \*

Washington Street was the first in the city to be graveled. This work was commenced in 1872, using crushed stone purchased from the Illinois Central Railroad at a cost of 50 cents per cubic yard. The

city bore part of the expense, with the property owners along Washington Street being assessed at the rate of 60 cents per front foot for the improvement, which included gutters paved with flagstone.

During the next ten years most of the downtown business streets were graveled. Some of this early graveling was referred to as "macadamizing". This consisted of several layers of coarse crushed rock or gravel, each of which were separately rolled. The final layer was then covered with fine gravel. The first brick paving was laid on Main Street just after the turn of the century. Additional brick paving was laid on parts of Fifth Street, Sixth Street, Fourth Avenue, Tenth Avenue and Thirteenth Avenue, and most of the business district by 1915.

In 1919 the first concrete was laid from the Fourth Avenue subway north to the high school then west to Illinois Avenue and south to the Illinois Central crossing on Meriden Street. The late 1920's and early 1930's brought concrete pavement to a large part of the city, the cost of which was met by special assessments.

\* \* \*

The hottest mayoral election in the city's history was that of 1915, when Ralph Madden, known because of his youth as the "Boy Mayor" defeated the incumbent Charles L. Rogers by one vote.

Rogers contested the election, arguing that many valid ballots had been disqualified on insufficient grounds in an attempt to defeat him. A recount was made — and Madden was declared the victor, still by one vote.

Undoubtedly pride, rather than the \$60 salary, prompted Rogers' fight for the job.

\* \* \*

Other highlights from the minutes of the council meetings through the years include:

The City, in the 1870's and 1880's, borrowed various sums of money by issuing bonds. The interest rates varied and the size of the issues was frequently only \$2,000 or \$3,000. Some of the issues appear to have consisted of one or two bonds purchased by residents of the city.

In 1880 the council voted to remove a peanut stand from the corner of Main and Washington Streets because the crowd of boys attracted by the stand obstructed traffic.

In 1887 a town clock was purchased to be placed in the old depot. Plans for the first sanitary sewer system were adopted. In 1896 construction was begun and continued through the year 1907. The cost was met by special assessments. This sewer system was on the

west side of the city and a few years later a second sanitary sewer system was constructed on the east side.

The Graves Public Library previously privately operated by the Mendota Library Association was transferred to the City of Mendota and an ordinance accepting the same and providing a tax for its maintenance was passed April 13, 1894. It was a frame building at the same location as the present library. In 1904 Andrew Carnegie donated \$10,000 for the purpose of erecting the present library building. The building cost \$12,000, the other \$2,000 coming from civic funds.

In 1919 the first motor fire truck was purchased for the sum of \$8,250.

At the city election in the year 1920 the men's and women's ballots were kept in separate boxes.

Since the city form of government was adopted in the year 1867 it has remained basically the same. Amendments to the Cities and Villages Act adopted by the legislature through the years have resulted in there being only two aldermen from each ward instead of three. The term of office of the mayor has been increased from two to four years. The elective office of City Marshal was abolished and in its stead we have a Chief of Police appointed by the Mayor with the approval of the city council.

The area of the city has increased by the platting and annexing of various subdivisions.

City facilities have been greatly improved and extended for several decades with the chief innovation being the all too familiar parking meters which appeared on the scene in 1947.

Perhaps the most classic example of Local government in action, however, came in 1902, when two tubular boilers were purchased and the council authorized construction of the boiler house and tall smoke stack, only recently torn down.

At this meeting one of the aldermen suggested that "the brick of the old chimney be used in the construction of the new one" but recommended "that the old stack be left standing until the new one had been completed." Advanced engineering, perhaps?

#### *Presidents of Mendota Town Board of Trustees*

1855-1856	J. H. Adams	1861-1862	Thomas Witchcraft
1856-1857	George W. Johnson	1862-1863	G. C. Gale
1857-1858	James Kenworthy	1863-1864	W. Pearce
1858-1859	George Wells	1864-1865	John H. Harris
1859-1860	D. A. Dodge	1865-1866	W. T. Black
1860-1861	George Wells	1866-1867	J. C. Corbus



*Mayors of the City of Mendota*

1867-1868	Boyd Lowe	1893-1897	Charles L. Rogers
1868-1871	George Emmerson	1897-1905	E. S. Browne
1871-1873	M. A. McKey	1905-1909	Newton Imus
1873-1875	James Hastings	1909-1911	J. W. Shepley
1875-1876	Lucien B. Crooker	1911-1913	Newton Imus
1876-1878	M. A. McKey	1913-1915	Charles L. Rogers
1878-1880	James Hastings	1915-1917	Ralph Madden
1880-1881	E. S. Childs	1917-1921	R. N. Crawford
1881-1882	K. Wormley	1921-1927	Ralph Madden
1882-1883	F. P. Snyder	1927-1933	John Rutishauser
1883-1885	Simeon Lee	1933-1936	John Faber (died in office)
1885-1887	L. S. Seaman	1936-1941	Jacob Spanier
1887-1889	J. A. Lamberton	1941-1945	L. J. Oester
1889-1891	Matthew Wilson	1945-1953	Glen Momeny
1891-1893	S. G. Dudgeon	1953-	Christ T. Troupis



## HITCHING POSTS TO PARKING METERS

MENDOTA, DURING one hundred years earned quite a reputation as a "Saturday Night Town." Early Saturday afternoon the hordes came, got their shopping done for the week, loaded the goods in their buggies and wagons, and gathered in groups on the sidewalks, to swap stories of times and conditions.

Everything from the state of the crops to the sins of the administration in Washington got a good going over, and not a little gossip was slipped into the conversations. News traveled slowly, and before the days of daily newspapers, radio and television, each event had to be talked over pro and con. . . each interesting wisp of gossip lingered over, to squeeze out the last juicy tidbit of information.

Saturday nights on the streets of Mendota was indeed a grand conclave — the week's social event — with friendships renewed. Stores, saloons, barbershops remained open late. Men got spruced up for Sunday, and the hair was thick on the barbershop floors when the last locks were shorn and the tonsorial artists wearily swept up before they trudged home to their beds.

Yes, Mendota was a Saturday night town, and you had to get in town early to find a hitching post. Though Mendota was the "hitching-postest" town you could find, there never seemed to be enough. Visitors stayed longer, for those were leisurely days. There is no record that anybody ever thought of hitching meters. This bustling

town in the horse and buggy era foretold the parking troubles of the 40's and 50's of this century.

There was a horse thief shooting affair near Paw Paw Grove in the fall of 1863.

Dr. Caldwell, horse tamer, was busy teaching horse breaking methods to a class of 50. The subjects used were an unbroken three-year-old colt belonging to Philo Castle and an old mare belonging to Mr. Camerer of Troy Grove.

The same year the press announced the purchase in the East of a Morgan horse by R. N. Woods Esq. of Malugin's Grove.

In 1868 someone counted 96 teams on the streets, 12 at one time all loaded with "porkers".

## THE HORSEY SET

Mendota alleys were laid out so that there were, in the older plats in the town, wider alleys in the center of the block so that carriages could properly turn around. Fine, haughty stables and carriage houses stood along the alleys in all sections of the city. Feeding, watering, and grooming the horses was a daily chore in those magnificent, leisurely days. Vegetable and flower gardens grew lusher, more bountifully, because there was an abundance of manure.

The farmers not only had their wagons and their every-day buggies, but most of them went in for fancy horseflesh. Along with this went a classy carriage and a pair of high steppers, beautifully groomed and harnessed for any proper occasion.

Folks living in the town, too, had their horses and buggies and carriages. The kind of a horse you drove and the kind of a carriage you kept established your social position.

Noted among the "fancy" driving horses of this era was a mare owned and driven by George Madden, who ran the Germania Bank. His mare was known as "Lily".

Max Freedman is remembered for his beautiful driving horses. One such proud animal was "Plotta," registered with the American Trotting Register, along about 1910. When Plotta got old, Mr. Freedman sold her to William B. Ward for \$50 and the promise of a good home for her. Plotta raised three colts. Two of these, Freeda Bell and Teddy, were proudly owned by Adam Sibigtroth and Edward Zorn. The third colt, Max, was an outlaw. It is said that even Elvis Earle, an experienced trainer, could not break him and finally acknowledged defeat.



Each winter, of course, saw a splendid collection of sleighs, cutters and bobsleds, replete with bells and great buffalo robes to keep the occupants warm. There was a sleigh race in January, 1877, according to a newspaper account, starting at Thirteenth avenue and run down Sixth street. Participants were Belknap, Kuney, Lawrie, Clint Shedd, Davis and Newport. Davis' horse overtook Newport's, whose horse joined in along the ditch.

Humans and horses had to be watered, naturally, and there were wooden pumps with tin-cups and convenient watering troughs. These were located near the city clerk's office; at the corner of Washington and Illinois near the present candy kitchen; another near the post-office. There was one south of the Faber Hotel and another across from the present Gamble store at Jefferson and Illinois. Also an attempt at an artesian well at Sixth street and the railroad. The last of the equine spas to be removed was the iron tank in front of the city clerk's office, which was taken away only a few years ago.

There were horse fairs and horse shows in the city as early as 1869. Accounts of the time state they were held at the fairgrounds, although this must have been a temporary race track because not until 1871 was an effort made to organize a permanent fairground and race course. A Mendota driving park association was formed in 1874.

Horse raffles were an exciting interlude of the times. There was a raffle of a Universalist blooded horse — whatever that is. Dr. Corbus was the lucky winner of the animal, a news report stated.

Life was not without its little calamities. A news item of the period relates that Parks, the drayman, drove off the side of the Sixth street bridge. A flood had washed out the dirt on the side and end of the bridge, leaving a crust of earth over the top and a cavity underneath. The horse broke through the crust and went down. With the help of several men with ropes the horse was extricated from his perilous position without any serious injury.

## THE VELOCIPED FAD

By 1870 velocipedes were all the rage. There was a velocipede exhibition on the street which created considerable excitement. Said the news item: "We hear of portly merchants endeavoring to propel the machine but failing on account of the shortness of their legs."

The velocipede, doubtless the high wheel variety, brought problems, because they were being classed as a nuisance, particularly when

ridden on the sidewalks. The village council in June, 1869, moved to arrest all persons running velocipedes on sidewalks. This problem persisted through the years until modern paving, at long last, gave the cyclists a firm footing.

Sidewalks being built on stilts, there was a low place on Sixth street back of the present Montagnoli grocery, formerly the Roth and Elsesser store. For about a half a block at this point horses were driven under the sidewalk and there hitched. This made a convenient shelter from sun and rain.

## THERE'S A HITCH IN IT

It was against the rules to hitch horses to the light company's poles. The horses chewed up the wood. But frequently this was ignored. One such belligerent returned to find his horse had been chained and locked to the pole. Undaunted, so the story goes, the irate farmer got a pair of chain-snipping shears at the Transfer Company and released his steed. He was hopping mad, and fortunately the light company manager was out of town or the story might not have ended there.

Hitching space being a problem, many farmers had hitching contracts with downtown livery stables. The fee at one time was 10 cents. In *The Reporter* in May, 1905, Mendota's feed yards carried a notice that the fee would be 25 cents per hitch. Prices were rising, even then. The message, signed by August Meisenbach, S. F. Gray, and J. A. Tapper, said that furthermore there would be an additional 25 cent charge for all rigs remaining after 10 o'clock. Apparently some visitors never wanted to go home. "Hurry over and put another quarter in the hitching meter, Zeke, our time runs out at 10 o'clock."

The city abounded with livery stables, where horses could be rented by the day, week, or hour, and where steeds were boarded. Visiting drummers would get off the Burlington or I. C. and hire a carriage to make their trips to country stores and hamlets not accessible by rail. Those who could not afford a driving mare or saddle horse would rent horses for trips to nearby communities. . . .or just for fun. . . .and many a young Mendota swain courted his best girl in a rig rented from a local livery stable.

So far as can be determined, the first livery stable was opened in Mendota in 1857, operated by Gabriel Pohl. Another early livery and boarding stable was that of Pulver and Clark. Peter Pulver

married the oldest sister of the father of Claude and Bertha Radley. The partner, Clinton Clark, married the youngest sister. Parker went about among the farmers of the area buying heavy draft horses for eastern markets. The horses were delivered to the Pulver and Clark stable and then shipped by the carload, usually to Boston. Some of them were shipped overseas.

One of the most prominent of the early livery stables was the Meisenbach Stables, located on Illinois street where the Conkey factory formerly stood and now occupied by Brown's Feed Store.

Another well-known livery stable was known as Hackett's, located in a long barn extending from Illinois avenue to the creek, along Jefferson street.

The block extending from the present Central Oil company to Widmer's garage was a fabulous area in those days. It contained Hackett's, Peter Sunday's carriage shop, Herman Miller's blacksmith shop, a saloon, and the Bauer and Bilhorn feed yard.

## "WHAT AM I OFFERED?"

Horse sales were held every other Saturday, and in the period from the late 80's to at least 1910 this block was busy with horses, sellers, and buyers. Buyers would jog the horses up and down the street to "wind" them; that is, to test their soundness before bidding on them.

Buyers would intercept farmers with horses for sale as far away as 13th avenue and make a private bid. If the animal was not bought, other buyers, a few blocks nearer town, would make other bids. These later bidders were thought to be in collusion with those stationed farther out, attempting a series of stepped-up offers, each slightly more attractive than the former.

On sales day, it is reported, good housewives kept their doors locked. Whether this was from fear of the visiting buyers or fear of gypsies, who seemed to concentrate here on sales days, is not definitely known.

\* \* \*

Harry Boslough had another livery stable situated just east of the Mendota Trouser Company, and Jim Mahar operated one on Sixth street south from the Tower factory. It burned down about 1910. Bill Bauer and John Bilhorn ran a feed yard, located on the site of the present Buick garage at Illinois and Monroe.

But the August Meisenbach stable was probably the most sump-

tuous of them all, with a long wide drive-through . . . fine carriages and gentle-mannered driving horses.

Horses needed to be shod and carriages were always needing new rims, felloes, or shafts. Blacksmithing and carriage repairing comprised a thriving industry. Livery stables had their blacksmiths in attendance. Walter Boettcher was one of the best known of the local smithies, having his establishment back of what was then Fred Oester's implement shop, near the site of the present State Theatre.

Not only was the smithy a mighty man, but he was in his way a center of topical discussions of the day. He was an oracle, of a type. Between pumping the bellows to his forge and wiping the perspiration from his brow, he held forth in conversation on weighty topics, with an eager claque of visitors who dropped in for a morning or an afternoon. In his denim shirt with sleeves cut off, and heavy leather apron, he "burned" shoes into place on the hoof and banged away at his anvil. He seldom stopped working. He was paid, apparently, by the job and not by the hour.

Herman Miller had such a blacksmith shop north of Hackett's livery stable. He excelled, among other things, in clipping horses, at \$1.50 per head.

Joe Howarth also had a blacksmith shop and shoeing establishment on the corner of the lot where the Kroger store now stands.

J. P. Frey was still horse-shoeing in 1913.

An entrance from Illinois avenue led down to a blacksmith shop under the present A and P store, operated by one Dobbie.

A pleasant duty for bystanders or curious boys was that of shoeing off the flies with an macabre contrivance made of a horses' tail secured to a stubby broom handle.

Most smithies of the day in Mendota had a choice vocabulary of invective and cuss-words, especially for the horse that did not docilely submit to his ministrations.

## WHAT'S UP, DOC?

The large horse population, too, along with farm animals of all kinds, necessitated a busy group of veterinarians. In those days the vets had little time for dogs and household pets — they were needed to keep draft animals on the farms and driving horses from going lame and halt.

The Matt Biers horse barns, located on Third Avenue, were the center of a glorious and thriving business in those days. Spick and



span, with screens at every door and window, and painted a pure white with snappy green trim, the Biers horse establishment was known far and wide. Buyers came from great distances to attend horse sales, and to buy saddle or harness horses, or percherons, for their stables. It is said that nearly every sale saw buyers from points as distant as New York City — so famous was the Biers establishment.

To the east of the Biers barns was a fancy riding and exercising ring, kept up in those days in sumptuous style. One barn was for saddle and riding horses; another for draft animals. Sales were held fortnightly, with 200 to 300 horses sold each sale and shipped out in carloads.

Mr. Biers was in demand as a judge at the International in Chicago and Madison Square Garden, New York.

## IT'S ALL IN THE BREEDING

There were many other breeders of driving and draft horses. It was not an unusual sight to see a dozen big, fancy stallions — Belgians, Percherons, or Clydesdales — stepping down Mendota streets led by a groom who was as proud as a peacock.

One such breeder was Alderman Ganz. We know little of his stud horse activities, but the story has come down about his sagacity as an alderman. He said little during heated city council discussions, but always came up with a motion when he thought the problem had been debated sufficiently.

On one occasion, it is said, he moved that the fire whistle go "toot, toot" instead of "teet, teet." In other words, he thought it should be louder.

Clara Goodwin relates that in those days each beau drove a horse (probably dad's) and each horse was usually blind in one eye, not bad lookers at all, and could they go! The highlight of the week was usually a Sunday afternoon drive to La Moille, nine miles away. "Here the horses were tied," she relates, "in the shade, while we meandered over to the cemetery on the edge of town and spent the time reading epitaphs. We would then have supper at the Fagan hotel, and afterwards attend church. Ten o'clock was the deadline for getting home, and we usually made it on time."

Miss Goodwin adds, sagely, that today ten o'clock is usually the time for going out.

Another phenomenon of the olden days were the wandering gypsy tribes, nomads of the road, who traveled in caravans of gaudily deco-

rated carts and wagons. Children ran, and merchants winced as swarms of colorfully costumed gypsy women with their full and billowy skirts swarmed into their stores. While they were wrapping packages for those who made purchases, vast amounts of goods disappeared, it is suspected, under the folds of the skirts of the others.

The north and south road a mile west of town was "gypsy lane." Police Chief Charley Beckett, with his big ten-gallon hat, shooed them out of town as soon as he could round them up. The gypsy caravans camped out on this road, which was protected on both sides with huge osage hedgerows, a natural protection and cover for these forerunners of today's all-aluminum house trailers.

## RUNNIN' WILD

There were, of course, frequent run-aways. This was always an exciting interlude in the even-moving times, and a subject of much heroic bravery, especially when a woman was at the reins. True gallants lived in those days! Accidents, too, as a result of being bitten or kicked by a recalcitrant nag or frisky young colt.

A newspaper account like the following in June, 1868, was typical of any normal week: "Saturday was a day of runaways. None of the horses were hurt, but the wagons fared badly."

One such runaway which was noted in December, 1901, recounted that while Mrs. E. G. McIntire and Mrs. J. E. Caswell were driving home from a meeting of the "Friends in Council" at the Wylie residence, at dusk, the horse, through some trouble with the reins, became unmanageable and ran away towards home. At the bridge near the old north school house (Guiles avenue and 16th street) both ladies were thrown from the buggy. Mrs. McIntire received painful injuries. Mrs. Caswell was more shocked than hurt. The horse was found in the barn at home, minus part of the rig.

Nothing has come down to us regarding the skill, or lack of it, of women drivers.

Other runaways reported in 1912 involved a team of John Wood's, which raced east on Washington street, south on Main to Fifth street, where the team turned east and hit a tree. The same week George Kohl was thrown from a buggy when his horse took fright near the Sixth street crossing, spilling and injuring Mr. Kohl in front of the

police station. The horse broke from the buggy and was afterwards caught.

## PONY BOY

In the early days many Mendota boys owned genuine Indian ponies. They rode them bareback, though the older boys had old Civil war saddles bought for \$2. Lee Scott, a former Mendota boy, relates that his ambition was to have an English hog-skin saddle. His father promised one when the boy should learn to milk the cow. The bargain was kept.

Shetland ponies, too, were a favorite animal in the horsey days. A well-behaved youngster in a family with sufficient means, and most farm youngsters, had their ponies, which they rode jauntily bareback, or hitched to a little two-wheel wicker cart.

Back in 1900 a newspaper relates that C. Austin bought a Shetland pony from a party in Franklin Grove. The colt tipped the beam at only 60 pounds, even though nearly a year old. This pony, named "Star Pointer," was to be teamed with another by the name of "Cy" purchased previously, and when broken, was prophesied to be the smallest team in the state.

Some horse fanciers used the city streets for the exhibition or training of stallions. This became a nuisance and moreover endangered lives. An ordinance was passed, therefore, April 4, 1887, making it unlawful for stallions to be trained or exhibited upon Washington street east of the city hall, or upon Illinois street south of Jefferson street, or upon Jefferson street east of Illinois, or upon Main street between Fifth and Eighth streets. The penalty was a fine not to exceed \$100.

In those days George Roth drove a horse-drawn bus, and a favorite trip was to Starved Rock for a day's outing. Four o'clock in the morning was the usual starting time. When the bus and its passengers reached the hills around Utica, George would yell, "everybody out and help push," and that's just what they did.

Another familiar sight was that of Tommy McGrath and his sprinkling wagon. Tommy was short and stubby, and his short legs scarcely could reach the pedals that controlled the water flow. But on that water wagon, Tom was king.

When the Frank Reiter harness shop finally closed up in the late 20's, it signalled the final mastery of the automobile. But in the years prior, many harness-makers were kept busy, including Nick Reiter,

John Bowes, and John Eckart. Peter Kreis was another harness-maker, prominent about 1858 to 1875, and later Emil and Henry Kreis who had a shop where the Barr shoe store is now located.

Another thriving harness shop was that of Crandall and Ladd, selling blankets, robes, and whips in addition to saddles and harness. This firm was taken over in 1903 by E. J. Staten and George E. Blanchard and the stock closed out.

In this beautiful, wonderful world of horseflesh, there were sinister influences at work. Horse thieving was a common problem to law enforcement officers. Horse thieves, estimated "to be in the hundreds," were suspected to have collected around the vicinity of Mendota, according to the July 11, 1860, issue of the Mendota newspaper. An account states that James Boyle had two bay mares taken from him. After extensive searching and with the help of friends the thief was apprehended in Oregon, Illinois, and one of the horses located. The thief was a native Mendotan, one Nick Peterson. He was bounced into the Oregon jail to serve his sentence.

George Otterbach was a great lover of horses and had some fine ones. One team was stolen the exact day he had a date with a girl in Troy Grove.

Horse-lovers of the period had an uncanny memory for the markings of teams, and could recognize them like we recognize people. George Otterbach had another team stolen. Some time later, a Mendotan riding on a street car in Chicago, thought he recognized George's stolen team. He hopped off the car, made sure of his identification, and by reporting the incident to the police was instrumental in regaining possession of the team and the arrest of the culprits.

Often, however, the "stolen" horses turned out to be merely cases of estrayed animals. Later they were often found wandering loose and brought back to their stalls. Lost and strayed animals was a frequent source of want ads in the local newspapers.

## FAST-STEPPERS

Quite a number of Mendota folks owned fast-stepping trotters and pacers. There were many unscheduled races on wide roads, and quite a few raced at fairs as a hobby or a business.

The fabulous Burright family even then had developed knowing ways with trotting horses and had some thoroughbreds with royal lineage and developed a big reputation both on the track and with their horses in breeding activities.



The Otterbach family is another which made successful history with trotters and pacers. As late as 1927, Mr. Geo. Otterbach had a string of racers and an important victory at the State Fair at Springfield was exciting news to the people of Mendota. Not a few bets were placed on the home-town horseflesh — with, we suspect, the usual results: "I'd of won if he hadn't broke right after the start in that third heat."

Mendota was an important link in the Illinois Valley Racing circuit. George Madden was secretary and later president. Mendota always succeeded in getting choice dates. A report issued in 1905 stated that West Chicago and Sandwich quit in a huff because the schedule of dates offered them was not agreeable.



## HORSES WANTED!

The undersigned will be at  
Mendota every Saturday, for  
the purpose of purchasing

DRIVERS, CHUNKS &  
DRAFT HORSES.

---

Call at Fair Grounds.  
Someone always there.

## BIERS & PETERSON,

MENDOTA, ILL.

Seen regularly in the Mendota press back in 1900 was an ad, offering to buy horses. Biers and Peterson were the proprietors, and they were seeking drivers, "chunks," and draft horses. They did business at the fairgrounds.

With so much emphasis on horse-drawn transportation, it is natural that carriage-building would be a thriving trade in the village. Implement houses handled Bradley, Studebaker, DeKalb and other farm wagons. Sunday and Faber had an establishment where the food locker plant is now situated on Illinois avenue, handling factory-made buggies and carriages.

The first carriage-maker to take note of the potentialities of the thriving Mendota was one James Kenworthy, who came to the village in 1854. He continued to make carriages for a period of 22 years.

A famous and durable Mendota wagon product in the years before the turn of the century was the Donohue and Madden farm wagon. These were made by John C. Madden and Peter Donohue in their foundry and factory located from Main to Illinois at Monroe street. A predecessor company known as the Eagle Manufacturing Company had made the Jesse Frey gang plow.

## CARRIAGE ENTRANCE

Probably the best-known carriage factory was that known first as Scheidenhelm and Washburne, with a blacksmith shop in connection. This firm later became Scheidenhelm and Schaller, and then Schaller and Goebel, located in what is now the west half of the present Mendota Auto Company, Ford dealers.

This firm was owned and operated by John S. Goebel and Veit C. Schaller. The nameplates carried on the buggies and carriages, "Schaller and Goebel, Mendota" was a proud trademark. One of these carriages is to be exhibited in the centennial celebration this year, 1953. John Goebel started at 50 cents a day as a blacksmith's helper. Carriages were assembled and painted, varnished and striped. Mr. Goebel was an expert striper, and an artist at painting those flowers and rosettes on the sides of the carriages. This was about 1898.

It is amusing that though he was an expert carriage-maker, and later a successful Ford automobile dealer, John Goebel lived in fear and dread of both driving horses and automobiles. Mr. Goebel specialized in buggies and left Mr. Schaller to nurse along the auto business. Mr. Goebel had no faith in the automobile, and like so many of that day, didn't think the automobile would ever make good and he pointedly said so. When he rode with others he held on like a tiger.

John Goebel simply wouldn't have enjoyed this modern age at all.

The firm made about 200 buggies per year, including beautiful phaetons and carriages of the funeral type.

Later an addition was built to the building, over the Mendota creek, enlarging their space.

Mendota Auto Company became the third Ford dealer in the state of Illinois, and today they are the 21st oldest continuous Ford dealer in the entire nation.

The first cars sold were the famous Model T, and it was not uncommon to sell 180 to 200 of Henry's famous cars in a single year. Later they sold Fordson tractors.

It is rumored that Henry Ford went through Mendota at one time on one of his auto treks with Harvey Firestone and Thomas Edison, but this has not been confirmed.

It is said that M. J. Elsesser was once offered the chance to buy some Ford stock in those early days. He declined, saying it was just "one of those schemes."

But belittle the horseless carriage as they might and call it just a crazy fad, the automobile came to Mendota in its relentless way and it came to stay. The first car in town is thought to have been driven by George Tower. It was a Sears, of the "motor buggy" type similar to the antique Sears now owned by the Widmer Brothers.

J. R. Woods, president of the National Bank, who lived in La Moille, had an early Rambler and drove it daily (when it did not break down) between his home in La Moille and his bank in Mendota. William Hoerner was another who had one of these early 2-cylinder Ramblers. John Ferguson owned an Oldsmobile.

John Yost, a farm implement dealer, and two other Mendotans, each bought a car named the "Glide," about 1904. Nick Cummings owned one, and the Truckenbrod Brothers, Henry and Jake, owned another. This car was made by the Bartholemew firm in Peoria, which had made its reputation, of all things, building peanut roasters. In 1904, when John Yost went to get his car from the factory in Peoria it took a day and a half to get it back. The last day they got lost right out in Clarion township. Finally they spotted the Sublette church steeple and got their bearings.

## HIT THE ROAD

Imperfect construction and tortuous roads spelled a quick doom to a car of the early 1900's. They kept their Glides two years. Tired of making repairs and fixing tires, they bought a Rambler with solid

rubber tires. This was in 1906. The next year John Yost bought a Jackson car.

So long as the commerce of the country was carried on by horses and by railroads, the atrocious and muddy roads were quite acceptable. The automobile needed a sound footing underneath, and good roads movements began. Editor Otto Kieselbach in his Mendota Reporter in the spring of 1905 wrote eloquently about a "Good Roads Special" train which was heading for the Lewis and Clark Exposition in Portland, Oregon, making stops all along the route to promote the needs of good roads.

This good roads crusade ended in failure when it reach Galesburg. Farmers were violently opposed to good roads. Everywhere the men who rode the special were accused of being interested only in "rake-offs" on sale of machinery and road-building equipment.

Mr. Kieselbach editorialized as follows, showing an uncanny insight into the future: "A good cause cannot lose caste, even though it might be represented by those not worthy to represent it. The cause of Good Roads in this country will march on, no matter whether."

## TRAILS AND PIKES

Trails and pikes there were plenty, some adorned with the term "plank roads," which were roads kept from sinking out of sight by an underlying bed of logs or planks. There was a plank road connecting Dixon and Peru, with stage stops and taverns along the way where horses were changed and where travelers found food and lodging. Peak's Tavern, north of Peru, was one famous stopping place. The trail ran through the town of Homer, now Troy Grove, past the Hepinstall stone house and thus to Mendota. This route probably followed an old Indian trail, for the Hepinstall house, now torn down, was built like a fort.

The so-called "old Chicago road" missed Mendota, running from a point east of La Moille through Clarion township, crossing the present Mendota-Dixon highway at a point near Henkel, north of Mendota, and thence in a northeasterly direction.

The first good roads were gravel, and any rate of progress faster than 25 miles an hour was "speeding." The papers then, as now, carried reports of smashups. One such account related that Ed. Kellien and Henry Sibigtroth, of Ohio, Illinois, skidded on a recently graded road four miles west of Mendota. The rate of speed was 30



miles an hour. A front tire "exploded" and the Ford turned over in the ditch, pitching occupants through the windshield.

Route 2 was the north and south road between Mendota and Peru. The present U. S. highway 34 was given the glorious name of "Cannonball" route, and telephone posts carried a black dot on a round white background.

The highway department scheduled an improvement of the Cannonball route through Mendota which would parallel the Burlington railroad. Some bridges were even built. But farmers were still dubious about good roads, particularly when this involved splitting up their fields. As a result, in 1925, a heated series of protest meetings was held in Mendota objecting to the new plans. Legal procedures held up the work. The state, impatient at the delay, finally paved the road along the old route. This is the reason for never-used bridges in pastures and a tortuous and twisting route between Mendota and Somonauk which only now, in 1953, shows evidence of being straightened out. Mendota stayed in the mud for quite a few years due to this feud, while paving went in from Somonauk eastward.

Those were the days of tourist camps. Tourists pitched their tents and cooked their meals. Every progressive community set up tourist camps to attract auto visitors. Mendota was right in the van of this movement, and in 1926 the Mendota Kiwanis club fitted up a tourist camp at the site of the north end school, at the corner of 16th street and Guiles avenue. It later fell into disuse when tourists showed a hankering for clean beds and the comforts of tourist homes and hotels.

The first ads for automobiles were beginning to appear in 1907. The Jackson car, sold by Tower Brothers, Yost, and Oester. A new 20 to 24 horsepower Jackson (chain drive) could be bought for \$1250, while a fancy 40 horsepower shaft drive cost \$2500. These dealers also offered a nifty 14 horsepower runabout for only \$850. Quite a far cry from today's 200 horsepower gaints, although on a dollar per pound basis today's cars are cheaper than the crude pioneering models of those days.

## "MY FAREWELL CAR"

A half page ad appeared to promote the Buick. It was handled by the Smith car agency in Earlville, which also handled the Cadillac. Martin Fahler ran the Mendota branch starting in 1907, and the Fahler motor company continued to be a leading auto dealer in Mendota until

1935, still handling Buicks, until the franchise passed to Alvin Truckenbrod, Gilbert Truckenbrod and William Widmer.

A complete roster of Mendota automobile dealers over the years would require a chapter by itself. Elmer Maus advertised the Reo in 1912 with a famous ad headed "My Farewell Car," by R. E. Olds, designer. In it Mr. Olds claimed this was the ultimate . . . cars couldn't ever be better. Later Mr. Maus sold the Overland and Willys-Overland in a location now occupied by the Sears store. At one period he also handled the Chalmers.

W. G. Lauterbach at one time handled Indian motorcycles, and P. J. Sondgeroth handled a car known as the R.C.H. "25".

The Hueter garage handled the Dodge in the early 20's, which later was operated by Roland Truckenbrod until purchased by J. C. Serup in 1939, who took on the Chevrolet dealership.

Mr. Serup gave up the Chevrolet franchise shortly after World War II broke out in 1941, and in 1946 resumed the dealership of Dodge and Plymouth, constructing a new garage and showroom on 13th avenue near Washington.

At the same time the Chevrolet dealership was taken up by Ed. Lorack, who located on West Washington road.

Richard Stenger handled the Chrysler automobile for several years about 1925 to 1928, located in the building vacated by the Conkey factory after their fire, formerly the Meisenbach stables.

In 1929 the Prescott Brothers set up an oil station, garage, and auto sales establishment at 13th avenue and Washington, a business which was continuously expanded over the years. They have been the continuous dealers since for Chrysler and Plymouth.

Back in 1920 Roy Yenerich for a brief period was agent for the Paige.

Ed Kopp handled the Nash car in the period about 1926 to 1930, operating from the Meyers garage where the Purity Ice Cream plant is now located, on Washington street.

Blotch and Gephard handled the Columbia Six in 1920. A. J. Wolfe was the Hudson-Essex dealer in the late 20's, and the Gus Spitz garage was distributor for the Erskine, built by Studebaker.

The Pontiac car was at one time handled by the Fahler, and later Truckenbrod garage, and after the war the dealership was taken up by Harry Schimmer.

Ray Possley was for several years the Packard dealer, and Jones

Motor Sales are the Studebaker dealer. In the post-war period Alvin Truckenbrod represented the Kaiser-Frazier cars.

We must advance to the year 1912 before we have the first auto truck in Mendota. This was purchased by the Joseph Schwarz Company (furniture and undertaking). Frank Schwarz announced that he had made a delivery of furniture using his new truck. The customer was located near Arlington, a "right fur piece" for delivery at retail in those days.

## "HIT AND RUN"

The "hit and run" terror entered into the duel which was to determine whether the horse or the motor carriage was to survive. A reward of \$25 was offered in June, 1905, for the arrest of the "parties in an automobile" which left Mendota between the hours of 12 noon and 1 p.m. and which subsequently upset the buggy driven by Mrs. William Coss, near the Ferguson farm. The hit and run car carried two gentlemen and one lady. The ad, inserted by William Coss, the husband, asked that information be sent to Marshal Charles Becket.

Claude Radley, when he came to Mendota as manager of the Northern Illinois Telephone Company in 1907, brought with him a single cylinder Reo, made in Michigan by Ransom E. Olds who had earlier made a name for himself by designing the Oldsmobile. This snappy little single seater chugged and shook with a mighty roar, but it got places. It cranked on the side. Mr. Radley used it to pull a telephone cable through a manhole, and thus early proved the future potentialities of the automobile for uses other than pleasure.

Ed. Hempstead, who operated a glove factory, had an early model Buick car, and State Senator Corbus Gardner cut a fancy figure in a Falcar. It was a racy sports roadster type, long and sleek, with bucket seats on the back, according to old timers. Mr. Gardner also owned an Argo Electric. Mrs. Dan Tower also drove a quiet Detroit Electric which was a familiar sight on the streets of Mendota. Harvey Scott and Mark Crandall also drove Electrics. The electrics drove with a tiller instead of a steering wheel, and were glass enclosed . . . forerunner of the later sedan models. Mrs. E. P. Fassett drove an Argo electric, one with a steering wheel instead of tiller.

Claude Radley relates that he charged the batteries in the early days with battery charging equipment at the telephone office.

John Moore, who worked for the J. D. Tower Company, owned a White Steamer; later a Michigan (the Mighty Michigan) and still later drove a Winton.

Dad Elwell opened one of the first garages in a spot where The Reporter office is now located. He was also agent for the Rambler automobile, made in Kenosha, Wisconsin, later known as the Jefferey, and today the Nash.

Other early car dealers were Lewis and Waldorf, a firm comprised of Earl Lewis and Rufus Waldorf, located where Fitch laundry now is. They sold the Overland automobile. "We put in elaborate machinery and lathes for repair work," says Earl Lewis, "but there just weren't enough cars to justify it." When they gave up the dealership it was taken over by Dad Elwell.

## RESISTANCE SETS IN

Not all the worry to businessmen has been aroused as a result of parking meters. When the paving was put down in the business streets of Mendota, replacing the dirt-and-mud streets, you would think there would be jubilation all around. Such was not the case. Since the hitching posts and rings were removed when the paving was put in, the merchants noticed that this act was injuring their business because many farmers were not coming to Mendota to shop.

As a result a petition was circulated by Theo. Fischer, M. Elsesser, and Al Greenbaum, demanding to have them replaced. This petition was generously signed by businessmen and several additional petitions were circulated and signed by farmers.

During the controversy several pipe hitching posts were sawed off during the night and found prostrate on the sidewalk the next morning. Culprit unknown.

Early motorists relate that they could scarcely negotiate the hill at Bureau Creek on the Amboy road. Most of the time the occupants had to get out and push to help get 'er up the hill.

Later the hill just east of the present Stenger country home, near the golf course, was the favorite testing hill for new cars. If the car could make the hill on high, the feat was half the sale.

Favorite objectives for Sunday drivers were Wedron, Deer Park, and Starved Rock.

Those were the days of real comaradie on the part of motorists. If they met a car of the same make they honked. If they managed



to get out of the state and met another car with a license plate from the same state, they tooted their bulb horns in recognition. Cars were always breaking down, springs broke due to the bumpy roads, and no motorist dared drive out of the city unless he was trained in the art of changing tires and vulcanizing patches to tubes right along the roadside.

All sorts of new inventions came on the market, such as rear-engine cars and cars with individual spring suspension. Another crazy invention was steering-post shifting. Only in the last few years have manufacturers gotten around to standardizing such daring innovations in the sleek modern cars.

For rainy weather a giant rain cape was offered on the market. Occupants of the car drew the cape over their laps and went on their way, presumably oblivious to the weather. The clay surface roads of the day were treacherous, and a sudden rain found cars slipping off into the ditch, there to be retrieved by a friendly farmer's team of good old draft horses.

Not all farmers were friendly to the new horseless carriages, however. They objected to their noisy and smoky journeys, and so did their horses. Nothing frightened horses so much as coming upon an automobile. They reared, shied, and often launched into a wild run-away.

As a result there was a law passed which required a motorist, upon seeing a horse-driven vehicle approaching, to drive his car behind a bush or up a country lane, to dismount and walk up to the horse and lead him past his automobile, and not to start until the horse was safely out of earshot. Many a hostile farmer, it is said, used his whip on the venturesome motorist instead of on the horse.

In the early years a motorist, once issued a license, kept that license permanently. Not until about 1912 were annual licenses issued. Quite a number of Mendota car owners had extremely low license numbers, attesting that local motorists were early in taking to the new method of transportation.

For many years there was a local wheel tax of \$1.25 per year per vehicle. This money was used for the upkeep of city streets. Due to the difficulty of policing the tax and the new revenues from the fuel tax refunds from the state earmarked for street improvement, the wheel tax was abolished several years ago.

For many years there was a \$10 annual license fee imposed upon those operating a carriage, dray, or omnibus to carry passengers or freight.

A story is told of Nick Cummings and his experiences with his 1904 Glide. Holland's Hardware was a favorite hangout of the times, where visitors sat on nail kegs around the stove and swapped experiences. It seems that Nick Cummings, before he bought his car, would drive up to Holland's with his horse and rig, to join his pals. When he drove up to the curb he would habitually pull on the reins and yell to his horse, "Whoa, you So-and-So!"

When he got his Glide automobile he remained a victim of habit. He drove up to the curb in front of the store, hit the curbing with a heavy impact, all the while yelling "Whoa, you So-and-So!"

## THE GENTLEMEN OF THE PRESS

THE YEAR 1895 was drawing to a close, and Mark Ruggles was restless. Since early that year when he had sold his newspaper, *The Bulletin*, he had tired of riding a bicycle around the streets of Mendota and through the Alpine trails of Switzerland.

Not only was he restless. He was broke. Some unfortunate "investments" on the board of trade had wiped him out. So he borrowed \$1700 from a loyal friend, bought a few cases of type and a hand-operated Campbell press, and set up a new newspaper in rooms on the second floor at the back of a three story building located where the National Bank of Mendota now stands.

Since the paper was to stand for a bright new day in Mendota journalism he called it *The Sun* — "It Shines for Everyone." It would take at least \$75,000 now to launch a similar enterprise, so advanced is the equipment of printing and the modern-day requirements of a newspaper that is to serve a thriving community.

When Mark Ruggles started his paper it brought to four the number of papers in the town — a real era of rivalry in local newspaperdom. Mr. Ruggles was 29 years of age, a natural-born writer, and a business booster, always working for improvements in Mendota.

The other papers were *The Bulletin*, *The Reporter* and *The Post* which was printed in German. Intense newspaper competition that was to last for 32 years was set in motion.

The pioneer newspaper in Mendota was *The Press*, and its first issue was dated June 28, 1855. C. R. Fisk was the editor and proprietor. He disposed of the plant to the Andrew Brothers who issued the paper for a short time and then sold it to a Princeton firm. In 1856 they sold the paper to Col. J. R. S. Bond, who changed the name of the paper to *The Observer*. He in turn sold the publication to Crooker and Beck, who operated it for a year and a half and then closed the office.

G. Pohl started *The Mendota Democrat*, a German paper, during the late 50's, but gave up in 1859 and sold to an Ottawa concern.

Clearly, at that date, Mendota was not much of a newspaper town.

For 18 months the village was without a newspaper, when R. H. Ruggles purchased the plant and began operation in March, 1863, with still another change in name. He named it *The Mendota Bulletin*. Ruggles and Golliday were publishers.

In 1869, a second paper was established, named *The Chronicle*, with Snell and Merrill as publishers. F. D. Ford soon afterwards purchased Merrill's interest and later Snell's.

*The Chronicle* courageously stated that Mendota was populous enough to sustain two creditable newspapers. They thought differently by the next year, however, for *The Chronicle* and *The Bulletin* combined, with Ruggles and Ford as publishers, and Snell retired from publishing.

Ford and Ruggles split up and in 1874 Ford started another newspaper, *The Mendota News*, which had a brief and precarious existence. The paper had a space in the pavilion of the newspaper exhibition at the 1876 Centennial in Philadelphia before it folded, however.

C. R. Fisk, the editor of Mendota's first newspaper, returned during the early Civil War period and launched another newspaper which he called *The Mendota Times*.

## THE EDITOR AND THE HANGMAN'S ROPE

Though a Republican, Mr. Fisk was a red-hot secessionist and favored slavery. He said in his paper that "Old Abe would get some blue pills he could not digest" and called the soldier boys "Lincoln's hirelings." One night when the populace was drumming for recruits a company marched in front of his office, called him out, and compelled him to make a speech. This was not an ordinary speech, however, for dangling above the editor's head was a hangman's rope. The onlookers



ran up the stars and stripes. It is said they made Editor Fisk kneel down, kiss the American flag, and pledge allegiance to the flag and loyalty to the government.

In June, *The Times* folded and Editor Fisk departed for Henry, Illinois, where he operated a copperhead journal. He later went to Beardstown and later to Delavan where, while editor of that paper, he died in 1870.

\* \* \*

*The Bulletin*, under the editorship of R. H. Ruggles, progressed favorably, but not without editorial upheavals. The paper carried a notice in March of 1866 that "E. M. Mattison Quits Bulletin and Ruggles Returns." Only a few months later, in July, L. B. Crooker (who may have been the Crooker who earlier edited *The Observer*) quit in a huff, and the headlines again proclaimed that Ruggles was in sole charge. The next year Ruggles ran the job department but Bangs, Owen and Ford took over the paper, with J. P. Snell of Aurora back in the harness again as editor.

When Mr. Ruggles died in 1886 his son, Mark Ruggles, took charge. He was only 20 years old. About 1892 he employed George Nisley, who set type and wrote articles. During Mr. Ruggles' frequent absences from town, George Nisley took over. A gas engine ran the press. The office was located in the quarters now occupied by the Chamber of Commerce office.

Printers came and went and most of them were unreliable. About 1899 Mr. Nisley ran an advertisement for a "sober printer." None applied, but Will Leiser's mother asked concerning the job for her son who learned his trade at the Reporter office. He was hired, and thus began an association that ran for 45 years. They used to work until the early hours in the morning getting out the edition.

The old *Bulletin* was bought by Adam Kliyla, who traded it for an elevator in Bureau county. A man named Bates bought it, and Otto L. Rice served as editor. Their hearts were not in newspapering, however, and in 1896 they sold out to Mark Ruggles and he combined his year-old *Sun* with this paper and named it *The Sun-Bulletin*.

There was a picture of the big union depot in Mendota printed on the mast-head of the paper between the words "The Sun" and "Bulletin." Below the heading he carried the line: "Truth Crushed to Earth Will Rise Again."

\* \* \*

Meanwhile two other papers were leading a vigorous existence. One of these was *The Mendota Post*, published by Otto Kieselbach,

printed in the German language. It was printed in Aurora. Mr. Kieselbach was also editor of the Mendota Reporter, which had been founded in 1878 by John Sanford and G. P. Gardner. Later Mr. Seaman and Mr. Kieselbach purchased it, and in 1883 Mr. Kieselbach became sole owner.

The German paper ceased publication about the time of World War I.

Otto Kieselbach was an educated and talented writer. He was born in Germany in 1854 and later became a citizen of the United States. He taught German at Blackstone school in Mendota, and later became an attorney before entering the newspaper publishing business.

His paper was democratic, at least he supported the Palmer Sound Money faction of the Democratic party, and was named an elector on the ticket. He wrote lucidly and freely on the topics of the day.

*The Reporter* was always a factor in the newspaper activity in Mendota, even with the strong competition of Mark Ruggles' *Sun-Bulletin* which had by this time moved right across the street from *The Reporter*, on Illinois avenue, to the second floor location now occupied by Charles Sonntag's Shade Shop.

*The Reporter* was sold in 1915 to Edgar Koerper and Arthur Zolper, two employees of the paper, who ran it until 1919.

\* \* \*

Meanwhile the health of Mark Ruggles began to break down. He died May 1st, 1906, in Kankakee, Ill. The proud 44-year-old *Sun-Bulletin*, with William H. Leiser and George W. Nisley as its managing stalwarts, passed to Helen Hungerford Hallenberg. Her husband, Robert Hallenberg, took over as publisher.

Bob Hallenberg, formerly a Kentucky lawyer, was a polished speaker, a colorful writer, a popular mixer, and a community leader. He was one of those who helped to organize the Mendota Elks lodge. He liked to take trips and to hunt and fish.

In 1919 Nisley and Leiser felt that the time had come to own their own paper. They left the flourishing *Sun-Bulletin* and their \$25-a-week jobs, to launch out by purchasing *The Reporter*. Failure was freely predicted, but this did not daunt the two new publishers. It was a perfect combination. Bill, the back room printer and businessman — George, the writer, persistent solicitor of subscriptions and advertising, and general city greeter. It has often been said that during the 53 year newspaper span, George Nisley was a One Man Chamber of Commerce.

Both partners, from across the street, burned the mid-night oil.

They set a new subscription goal, first at 1000 new readers, then 1500, then 2,000. In a few years they had *The Sun-Bulletin* on the run. While they gained, *The Sun-Bulletin* lost. They put out a big, newsy paper. Nisley met every train, and nothing happened in the community that didn't merit a "piece in the paper." Their 600 subscriber list grew rapidly. They put on 1,000 new subscribers in ten months' time. Sounds like a fairy tale but it is the gospel truth.

In 1920 *The Sun-Bulletin* was sold to Irl Marshall, who had several newspapers and an advertising business in Chicago. One of his energetic editors was Clarence Potter. They strove to build circulation, put on two automobile prize subscription contests in three years.

Five years was enough, and Irl Marshall sold to John H. Millar, a Chicagoan, who had made an astounding success in the syndicated newspaper feature business. It was one of a chain, in the days when chains were unpopular. Kenneth B. Butler was appointed editor, his first job out of the University of Wisconsin journalism school. Butler had worked on several newspapers. A farm page was established, a sports page, and the first high school newspaper in the local paper (The Hi-Light) was launched in 1925 in this paper; and because the school authorities wished to avoid favoritism, also in *The Reporter*.

All the steam possible was put behind restoring *The Sun-Bulletin* to its old success. The paper launched baby contests, engaged in community work, carried human interest stories, sponsored bowling sweepstakes and cross-country runs. Ken Butler left in September, 1927, to purchase a weekly paper at Constantine, Michigan. A week later John Millar capitulated. He walked over to Nisley and Leiser and sold them the 65-year-old paper — lock, stock and barrel.

He threw a big banquet for the new owners, and admitted the competition had been too tough. The final issue was put together by Anna Marie Bromenschenkel and Helen Hoerner. William Wenninger, who had served on the high school paper, later edited a paper for Mr. Millar. Irving Easter, a favorite Sun-Bulletin assistant editor, purchased The Free Press at Sandwich.

\* \* \*

Mendota, despite its apprehensions in September, 1927, soon saw that a one-newspaper town was a good thing. *The Reporter* continued to report the news thoroughly, and in 1930 built a fine new building and added modern equipment. Among this equipment was a big new Goss Comet press which turned out the papers faster and easier.

Hard work continued to be the watchword of the owners. Meantime, Richard Leiser was operating the linotype, and Billy Leiser carted papers to the postoffice on publishing day. The circulation grew.

William H. Leiser died from a heart attack in 1945, and Mr. Nisley shortly afterwards sold out his interest to the Leiser sons, Dick and Billy, who have continued the paper's coverage and growth, and have installed additional modern equipment.

Under their management the paper has been a leader among weeklies in Illinois in picture coverage, and a machine to make cuts was installed. As always, *The Reporter* is active in community welfare, giving its columns freely to any worth-while civic enterprise. News coverage is energetic and complete. The paper has an outstanding sports page. The paper's makeup has been modernized and *The Reporter* is among the state's outstanding examples of weekly journalism. The paid circulation of 5,130 is probably the largest of any weekly in Illinois.

\* \* \*

The years between have not been without their amusing, and sometimes catastrophic, situations. Many an irate subscriber has cancelled his subscription — or merchant threatened to withdraw his advertising. In the early days of automobiles, many a motorist involved in an accident resented having it written up in the paper.

Then there was the time that the type stories regarding a Sublette wedding and a death of a citizen became jumbled and the account ran something like this: "The lovely bride was attired in a walnut casket, and the mourners threw the bridal bouquet into the last resting place."

Or the headline that has become famous:

## Woman Fell Off Back Porch; But Unhurt

And probably the most durable of all:—

## Outhouse Case Aired in Court



## FLAMBEAUX

**P**ERHAPS NOTHING so clearly reflects the changes in modes of communication over the last 100 years as the handling of political material in the weekly newspapers.

Gone are the days when the country newspapers took vigorous and vitriolic partisanship in every election, local and national. Instead, with most small cities and towns limited to but one newspaper, the editorial chore has shifted to an emphasis on non-partisan Get Out the Vote campaigns, with radio commentators and big city newspapers conducting the battle for the White House and Capitol Hill.

The clippings which follow represent Mendota's newspaper coverage of the hottest elections of the last century.

*From the Mendota Observer, October 24, 1860:*

Only Two Weeks More

Voters, Are You Ready

For The Question?

\* \* \*

# REPUBLICAN NOMINATIONS

For President

**ABRAHAM LINCOLN**

For Vice President

**HANNIBAL HAMLIN**

Two weeks more and the canvass closes. — The opportunity for choosing the next administration will then be presented. Voters, are you ready for the question? Never since the organization of the government was there a more important contest! Never a more serious issue! What shall be the status of the national domain? Shall it be Free or Slave? This is the real issue, let it be disguised as it may. It is simply the extension or non-extension of slavery. Simply whether the fertile plains of our national territories shall be homes for those who would own and cultivate the soil; or homes for hordes of slaves and their drivers. Voters, this question is to be decided by the ballot-box. Will you vote it up or vote it down? Breckenridge says vote it up. Bell says nothing, but is understood to be in favor of voting it up. Douglas says he don't care whether "vote it up or vote it down", while Lincoln and Hamlin say vote it down, and keep the

territories free for your children, as our fathers kept this territory free for theirs.

\* \* \*

This was the doctrine of the Declaration of Independence. This was the doctrine of the ordinance of 1887. This was the confirmed doctrine of the first Congress which met after the adoption of the Constitution. This doctrine was endorsed by Washington, Jefferson, Madison, Monroe, Randolph, Clay and Webster and it has been recognized in the legislature of the country for more than seventy years. Voters, will you now surrender this national Birthright for the deceptive and mythical doctrine of Popular Sovereignty? A doctrine hatched up by a demagogue, for the express purpose of betraying the Territories into the hands of the South? If not, then rally at the polls on Tuesday, November 6th, and cast your ballots for the men who hold that the Territories are free, and shall be kept free.

*From the Mendota Observer, October 31, 1860:*

## A GREAT DAY FOR MENDOTA!

### The People in Council.

Mendota was the scene on Monday last of one of the most successful and enthusiastic meetings

of the campaign. The people assembled by thousands to hear the eloquent Hale, whose fame as an

orator is known throughout the land.

One of the most interesting features of the occasion was the presence of a delegation of ladies from LaMoille, arrayed in the national colors, who marched in procession day and evening under the stars and stripes and carrying several banners.

The speaking was upon a stand erected near the Baptist church, at which the immense concourse assembled about 2 o'clock. They were addressed first by Hon. John W. North of Minnesota. This gentleman has few superiors as an orator and a sound politician. His speech was short, sensible and to the point. In the course of it he gave a cheering account of his own State, which was received with much applause. Senator Hale fol-

lowed in his usual happy and eloquent style, but as an exchange observes, it would be about as easy to "daguerreotype an earthquake or to paint thunder" as to describe with a pen the electrifying speech which he delivered. The immense throng were held enchained by his eloquence and humor until the sun had begun to sink behind the horizon.

\* \* \*

There was a lively meeting in the evening in Music Hall. Speeches were delivered by John W. North, Dr. Adams of Amboy (member of the State Senate) and Levi Kelsey of this place. Much enthusiasm was manifested and at a late hour at night the meeting adjourned to meet at the polls on Tuesday, November sixth, to vote the straight Republican ticket.

**VOTERS! TURN OUT  
EVERY MAN TO THE POLLS ON TUESDAY NEXT,  
WITHOUT FAIL, AND VOTE THE REPUBLICAN  
TICKET!!**

\* \* \*

### **LOOK OUT FOR SPURIOUS VOTES**

We again would caution all Republicans to use no votes except those printed under the direction of the Republican party. All manner of mongrel tickets will be in circulation with one or two names reserved in order if possible to make some encroachment upon our County and State Officers. Let Republicans stand like a rock against all attempts of our arch enemies, use no votes except those properly vouched for!

### **TELEGRAPHIC**

We have made arrangements to secure telegraphic dispatches on Wednesday, November 7th of the result of the election, and expect to be able to report in our next issue the election of Lincoln and Hamlin, together with the entire general, State and County Republican ticket. Let the people perform their part and all will be well. To the polls then every man of you, and when there vote the straight out Republican ticket, — beware of mixed tickets.

*From The Mendota Observer, Nov. 7, 1860:*

# GLORIOUS NEWS

## OLD ABE ELECTED

Illinois Redeemed By 20,000 Majority

Republicans! The hard fought contest is over, and victory is ours. Most nobly have you done your duty. You have fought the good fight and have borne away as TROPHIES of the BATTLE, the highest offices in the nation.

The enemies of the Union are *defeated* and *dethroned*. All their cunning devices have failed.

MENDOTA TOWNSHIP  
ABE LINCOLN ..... 443  
STEPHEN A. DOUGLAS .. 193

*From The Mendota Bulletin, Aug. 28, 1868:*

## REPUBLICAN MASS MEETING

Speeches By  
GOVERNOR R. J. OGLESBY.  
HON. B. C. COOK ETC.

**5,000 REPUBLICANS GATHERED IN COUNCIL**  
**MENDOTA WELCOMES THE GOVERNOR**  
**300 Tanners in Procession**

Nothing short of display headings will do justice to the spontaneous outburst of enthusiasm of last Tuesday. We hope our political opponents will excuse heavy letters and exclamation points.

Governor Oglesby arrived on the noon train from Chicago, and was received by the Committee of Reception, comprising our Mayor and 17 other of our leading republicans, and escorted to the residence of

Dr. Hodge, which became his headquarters for the day.

About the same time, a large delegation, led by a brass band in a band wagon, and a still larger wagon, containing a tall pole with a large flag and some 40 persons, followed by 20 or so wagons and carriages, filled with honest republicans, their wives and daughters, came in from the vicinity of Melugin and Paw Paw. Team after



team, from an early hour in the morning, were coming in from all points of the compass; while the noon train brought in many representations from Sublette, Amboy, Dixon, Meriden, Earl, Princeton, Wenona etc.

At 2 o'clock, when the meeting commenced, some 5,000 people were assembled about the speaker's stand in the open space near the Baptist church. Many carriages and wagons, full of listeners, occupied the edge of the crowd, and the orators, musicians, glee club and committee the stand.

After music by the band, Mr. Locke, an old, veteran, musical composer sang the Republican Rallying Song. Mayor Emmerson then introduced the Governor, who, in a two hour's speech, held the audience spell-bound by his eloquent earnestness and faithful portrayal of the issues before the country.

At 8 o'clock 200 Tanners marched to the depot and received the Amboy Tanners, 90 strong, and all moved in blazing battalion through the streets to the grounds and formed around the speaker's stand. A larger crowd than that of the afternoon was gathered together. Mr. Cook led off with an hour's speech, followed by Mr. McCall of Wenona and others. Among the good music of the occasion was the song of the "Tanner and Blue" by the Glee Club, with the following chorus:

Fill up the ranks for Grant, boys,  
Fill up for Colfax, too,  
For we will have for President  
A "Tanner" dressed in "Blue".

It called forth merited applause. The meeting adjourned about 11 o'clock, when the Tanners marched to the depot and saw their visitors off.

*From the Mendota Bulletin, Oct. 2, 1868:*

## THE DEMOCRATIC MEETING

in the city last Friday, was not a very big thing. Superhuman efforts had been put forth to have a large crowd in attendance, and to eclipse the Republican mass meeting of the 16th instant; but "what a fall there was, Oh, my countrymen!" In the afternoon, a delegation from Perkins Grove, LaMoille, and all the country west for many miles, came in, numbering 13 horsemen and less than a dozen wagons. They drove through Washington Street on a gallop, as though ashamed of themselves. A little later the same thing moved around the streets in a "grand procession" escorted by the Mendota White Boys on foot to the number of 48, and the band in a wagon.

We were not present to hear the speeches, but, as reported to us, they consisted *wholly* of denuncia-

tions of the radical Congress, radical party, and everything in that line, very much to the surprise of honest democrats, who expected to hear the candidates and principles of democracy portrayed in glowing colors.

The procession of torches in the evening was very good, considering the numbers, nearly 300, and of course could not be expected to make as much of a show as the 1236 Tanners of the 16th. They all seemed to have the disease, "Nigger on the Brain," very bad, as most of their mottoes and transparencies were on that opaque subject, such as, a picture of a buck nigger wreathed with the words, "Radical Lieutenant Governor of Louisiana"; another nigger trying to kiss a pretty white girl; a motto, "Niggers, buy your own Soap",

and a flag with this *eloquent* utterance, "White Men Must Rule America", (they have since 1861). The rebel cannon spoke forth in powdery tones, and the beautiful flag near the depot floated in the breeze as if indignant at the names foisted upon its folds; prominent democratic homes were illuminated, and everything went off very pleasantly, and without much excitement, until late in the evening, when whiskey and beer began to

work, — a more crazy, drunken, disgraceful set of men never being around our depot since it was built, than the crew of *White* "Boys" that evening, and we'll leave it to the democrats if it was not so. Subscriptions were raised the next morning to get many of them home on the train. "Alas! Poor Yorick!"

\* \* \* \* \*

#### MENDOTA TOWNSHIP

Ulyses Grant ..... 612

Horatio Seymour .... 284

*From the Mendota Bulletin, Aug. 10, 1888:*

## THE GREAT FAIR

St John, Palmer and Fifer—these three celebrated orators will be in Mendota all in one week. People "from miles around" are coming to our city by the thousands to hear them speak.

Close up the business houses in the afternoon.

The greatest Fair and political gathering ever seen in Illinois will be held in Mendota on Sept.

4, 5, 6 and 7, 1888. The Hon. John P. St John will address the people at the fair grounds on Wednesday, in the interest of the Prohibition Party. On Thursday the Hon. John M. Palmer will gather his hosts around him and expound the principle of Democracy and on Friday "Private" Jo Fifer, the next governor of Illinois will address the multitudes.

*From the Mendota Bulletin, Aug. 31, 1888:*

## LOCAL REPUBLICAN CLUB

The Republicans of this city have been organized into five separate clubs. First, the Tippecanoes, second, the Harrison and Morton club, composed of middle aged men who will wear white hats and carry red, white and blue umbrellas in the day time and hand lanterns at night,

third, the Torch Bearers, fourth, the Flambeau Club, 50 strong with nickel helmets, white capes and the unsuppressable flambeau which shoots fire ten feet in the air. Last are the Juvenile Republicans, not yet voters, but their enthusiasm is something to be admired.

*From the Mendota Bulletin, Sept. 14, 1888:*

## REPUBLICAN DAY — 706-477 !!!

Last Friday's demonstration the greatest ever held in Mendota.

Everybody regardless of party,

admits that it was the greatest rally ever held in this city.

Mr. Fifer arrived on the noon

train and was met by Mayor Lambertson, Col. McIntire, Marshall of the Day, the Fair officials, the Reception Committee and other citizens. The Flambeau Club escorted him to the Union Depot Hotel, where his physical wants were attended to. By this time the special trains began to arrive. The branch brought in between four and five hundred, the Streator branch as many more, Ottawa alone sending 250. Princeton about 200, and other towns in proportion.

After dinner the procession formed on Washington St. with the Monmouth band and the Mendota Flambeaux in the lead acting as escort to Private Jo Fifer and other citizens who followed in carriages. The Flambeaux Club carried off the laurels for the most attractive get up. Their dazzling nickel helmets, white and blue capes and the fire tossing flambeaux made a great sensation. They will be "much wanted" crowd before this campaign is over.

Behind these was the Mendota Marching Club and then came a great line of marchers from other

towns, namely; Ottawa, Mendota, Compton, Arlington, LaMoille, LaSalle, Earlville and Prophetstown. There were just 706 marchers, all in uniform and on the previous day there were just 477. These figures are uncolored non-partisan and correct.

\* \* \*

Mr. Fifer's speech was something worth going miles to hear. We cannot scare up adjectives enough to describe it. It was eloquent, it was scholarly, it was logical, honest and convincing, but it lacked two things—the bravado of Palmer and the sophistry of St John.

In the evening he was given a reception at Dr. Corbus' residence which had been beautifully decorated. Mr. Gerould illuminated the ground with arches, gas-trees and other unique designs.

After a grand display of fire works Hon. Isaac Clements addressed the people at the City Hall in a ringing speech. He was followed by Mr. Quinn when the storm came up and interrupted him.

The great fair was over and the town became quiet once more.

*From the Mendota Bulletin, Nov. 9, 1888:*

West Precinct	
Harrison .....	252
Cleveland .....	235
Fiske .....	12
Streeter .....	2

East Precinct	
Harrison .....	218
Cleveland .....	211
Fiske .....	9
Streeter .....	4

*From the Mendota Bulletin, Oct. 29, 1892:*

# WHERE WAS MENDOTA???

There was a grand Republican rally at Ottawa last night, but where was Mendota? She was like Loosh Crooker at the barbeque—conspicuous for her absence. Four years ago, when the special train

went from here to Ottawa there were 425 tickets sold, yesterday there were about 25.

People were asking for the Mendota delegation. When they went to the train to meet them they

found that the Flambeaux had been lost off the train and then the few members who were there did not fall into line, but straggled off like a lot of sheep. We asked who was in command of them and they replied, "Nobody, we's runnin' ourselves." That tells the whole thing in a nutshell. And in that magnificent pageant not a man to represent this town.

People wanted to know where was the famous Mendota Flambeau Club, the "pride of the west." Flambeaux lying in a ditch near Wedron, and the members of the club who did do their duty and try to represent the town were sneaking down to dark alleys, with their white coats folded up out of sight, ashamed to have it known that they were from Mendota. Compare this with the Flambeau Club that went

to Ottawa last time, the sensation of the State?

The flambeaux fell off the train, and "oh, what a fall was there my countrymen," for with it fell the reputation and pride of that once famous band of campaign warriors. What a drop from their once proud position.

We wouldn't care if it was so all over the State, but it is not. The Republican clubs of other towns are larger and better than ever and Illinois is going republican by 20,000 or better. But the Mendota Flambeau Club! Last campaign it rivaled the Ottawa Tippecanoes for supremacy in the State. Does it seem possible that they were once the rivals of the "Tips"? What is Mendota coming to? She is certainly not keeping up with the procession.

*From the Mendota Bulletin, Nov. 12, 1892:*

# ELECTION IN MENDOTA

You are living in a Republican town. Mendota has redeemed her-

self and is again in the Republican column by 18 majority.

West Precinct	
Cleveland .....	249
Harrison .....	237

East Precinct	
Harrison .....	241
Cleveland .....	211

*From The Sun-Bulletin, Oct. 3, 1912:*

## Crowds Attend the Big Fall Festival Prominent Political Speakers Attract Many

Tuesday marked the opening of the big fall festival. It was progressive day and was characterized in the afternoon by speeches by Hon. Raymond Robbins of Chicago and Hon. W. W. Kirby of Jacksonville, Fla. who both presented the cause of the progressive party.

**Republican Day Wednesday**  
Wednesday morning Gov. Deneen and his party in a special train arrived at 10:45 and were taken to the City Park in automobiles where a large crowd had gathered to hear the speakers and attend the horse show. In the party were Gov.



Deneen, Lt. Gov. Oglesby, Secy. of State C. J. Doyle, Atty Gen. Stead, Jas. B. Mccullough, Hon. Russell, Hon. B. M. Chipperfield and Hon. William E. Mason.

**Democratic Day Thursday**

Thursday was Democratic day

and Hon. Samuel Alschuler of Aurora was the speaker. He was welcomed at the depot by a large reception Committee after which a procession was formed and paraded the streets.

*From The Sun-Bulletin, Nov. 7, 1912:*

## DEMOCRACY IS TRIUMPHANT

### Woodrow Wilson elected next President

**Democratic Majorities in both House and Senate. Split in Republican ranks Disastrous.**

#### Mendota Twp.

**For President:**

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	Tot.
Taft, R	63	53	16	60	192
Wilson, D	185	99	119	126	529
Roosevelt, P	128	81	68	164	441

*From the Mendota Reporter, Sept. 15, 1932:*

## ROUSING MEETING FOR JUDGE HORNER

*He tells what he stands for in  
asking for the Governorship.  
Makes good impression on people.*

There was a rousing Democratic meeting held at the City Park this Thursday noon and it was largely attended. This was for the purpose of having our people meet Judge Henry Horner, the Democratic candidate for Governor of the State of Illinois. Mr. Horner was late in

arriving, so Atty. Madden introduced Atty. Elmer Mohan of Streator who is a candidate for the office of State's Attorney. Mr. Mohan made a very good speech and greatly impressed the people with his ability as an orator and also in stating facts concerning

what the Democratic party will make an effort to do. He told of a great wave that is sweeping over the country and LaSalle County is no exception. It looked to him like the entire ticket would be elected from top to bottom and he was satisfied a house cleaning was needed.

#### **Judge Horner Arrives**

Soon the principal speaker of the event arrived and Judge Horner and his party appeared at the City Park. Mr. Mohan ceased his talk and Atty. Madden introduced a number of the state candidates who were in the party. They all praised Judge Horner and told of the wonderful reception that the Judge is receiving wherever they stop. It looked as if it was going to be a landslide.

Judge Horner was then introduced by Mr. Madden and he was given a loud ovation by the people present. At that time little Jean Selby of Mendota, in behalf of the Democratic Woman's Club of this city presented the Judge with a beautiful basket of flowers of the Bi-Centennial colors, red, white and blue.

The Judge is a fine looking man and thanked the little girl for the flowers. He said the progress of

the world is made by the tottering steps of little children.

Mr. Horner started right off with his speech and stated that his one purpose of being a candidate for the office of Governor was to do something for the people of the State. This is a serious proposition. It is not a circus like his opponent is putting on as he and his party passes down the river in a government boat with vaudeville, music and lots of hilarity. Mr. Horner said it is a serious problem and looking into the faces of the people anyone can tell they have something to think about that calls for serious thinking. The entire nation is in the slumps and 12,000,000 men are out of employment. Nero fiddled while Rome burned and he wants the people to know that he is not fiddling while the people are in trouble and it looks as if the entire nation is going to disaster. He impressed the people with his earnest manner. He praised Franklin Roosevelt and said he was not a great engineer who was running for President. We have one of those Great Engineers at Washington today. When the tide turned he poured a lot of money into Wall Street and thought that would turn the tide.—

*From The Mendota Reporter, Oct. 13, 1932:*

## **EX-GOV. SMALL WAS HERE RALLY HELD SATURDAY EVENING**

---

**WELL ATTENDED REPUBLICAN RALLY AT  
ELK'S AUDITORIUM. MUCH ENTHUSIASM  
SHOWN. PARADE AT 7:30 THROUGH  
BUSINESS DISTRICT.**

**STATE AND COUNTY CANDIDATES WERE HERE TO  
MEET AND GREET OUR PEOPLE.**

---

**John E. Black Presided as Chairman.  
"Don't Let Chicago Dominate the State."  
was the Keynote of Talks.**

A Republican rally was held in Mendota Saturday evening and there was a large attendance at the Auditorium in spite of the fact that Saturday evening is usually devoted to shopping.—

Chairman Black next introduced Senator Noah M. Mason of Oglesby. Mr. Mason represents LaSalle County and is a live-wire

official. He does things just like Congressman Buckbee does. He had a blackboard and said it was a history lesson. The depressions have come under Democratic administrations with the exception of 1931-32.—

Mason made one of the best talks of the evening.

\* \* \*

*From The Mendota Reporter, Nov. 3, 1932:*

## **HOW TO VOTE A SPLIT BALLOT IS EXPLAINED**

**County Clerk Tells How You Should Mark Your  
Ballot, Cross in Square Decides  
How Votes Are Counted.**

\* \* \*

The attendance at the Republican rally on Friday was not large and it was thought that most of the people were at home listening to President Hoover's talk that evening.

*From The Mendota Reporter, Nov. 10, 1932:*

## **MENDOTA TOWNSHIP FOLLOWS THE NATION IN GREAT DEMOCRATIC LANDSLIDE**

**TWO PRECINCTS IN MENDOTA REMAIN IN  
REPUBLICAN COLUMN, SECOND AND FOURTH.  
ROOSEVELT CARRIES MENDOTA BY  
266 VOTES.**

**BUCKBEE WINS IN DISTRICT. REPUBLICANS SAVE TWO COUNTY OFFICES.**

\* \* \* \*

**Large Vote Cast in Every Precinct. Illinois Went Democratic for First Time in Many**

**Years. Many Surprises in Neighboring Townships. Mendota Casts 2,644 Votes.**

\* \* \* \*

Roosevelt .....	1,433
Hoover .....	1,167

*From The Mendota Reporter, Oct. 30, 1952:*

**VOTE • MENDOTA • VOTE**

*From The Mendota Reporter, Nov. 6, 1952:*

**Mendotans Go to Polls 90% Strong**

EISENHOWER .....	2564
STEVENSON .....	643

\* \* \*

The foregoing selections from the local press of former years gives a comprehensive view of national politics as seen across the desk of the local editor. This picture is somewhat out of focus for the past 30 years, during which little editorial has appeared, this having been taken over by the metropolitan dailies and radio and television.

Mendota, located in the far corner of the county, 30 miles from the county seat, has only rarely enjoyed state or county office. Among those who have gone it is likely that none from Mendota have played a larger part than Goedtner, Gardner, Witte, and Crawford.

Corbus P. Gardner, prominent Mendota attorney, was perhaps the outstanding Republican leader in the city. As State Senator he represented this district in the Illinois legislature in the 1898 session, being re-elected in 1902 and again in 1906, wherein his services were outstanding. Always active in civic affairs, he was a member of the Presbyterian church, Masons, Knights Templar, Chicago Medina Temple Shrine and Freeport Consistory, Elks, and Kiwanis, also the Union League club of Chicago.



His principal associates in party work, George D. Tower, R. N. Crawford, and Rudolph Witte are also deceased. Another associate was John W. Dubbs, for a time associated also in legal practice, still living.

Rudolph Witte, life-long Republican worker, served for many years as chairman of the county Republican central committee. Robert N. Crawford served a term as county treasurer, as did John Goedtner.

John Goedtner was a leader of the local Democratic party for over 50 years, having served as township supervisor for 22 years.

Among those active today, recognition should be given to Joseph P. Stremlau, B. Harry Reck, and Glenn Momeny—all active in their respective party circles.

B. Harry Reck, Republican, has had his law offices in Mendota for nearly 40 years. For 14 years he was judge of the county court of La Salle county, 1919 to 1934. Judge Reck campaigned for congress in 1936 and for circuit judge in 1939. He is active in boys and girls work in several state associations, and civically. He is associated in law practice with his son, Robert H. Reck, and with Ernest Claus.

Joseph Stremlau, Democrat, is one of the three representatives from La Salle county in the Illinois general assembly, where he has served the community well since 1948. He got his political start, as he likes to tell it, when his eleven children came of voting age. Always active in community work, "Joe" served for 13 years as manager of the Peterstown elevator, for four years as deputy sheriff of the county, four years with the state oil inspection division, and four years with the U. S. bureau of internal revenue as deputy collector in the first district. He resides with his family on his 200-acre farm about three miles from Mendota.

Glenn Momeny, who recently retired as mayor after serving eight years in that office, has been a Republican party worker since early manhood. He had a big part in the rejuvenation of the county Republican organization following the Democratic landslides of 20 years ago. He is chairman of the county Republican central committee. He is an employee of the Burlington railroad, and an active worker for civic betterment.



## HEAVENWARD POINT THE SPIRES

*"Let us build a Church that includes the whole of life, both the prosaic and the poetic, a religion that walks the earth and ministers to immediate needs, but which also rises to the stars and sweeps through the infinities of the imagination." — Ames.*

IT IS OFTEN SAID that the number of church spires in a town are a good index to the character of the community. If this is true, then Mendota may well be proud of its reputation in the religious world today.

The word of God is preached from the pulpits of eight churches in Mendota — five of whom have served almost a full century in this community. They are the Mendota Methodist, First Baptist, First Presbyterian, Holy Cross Catholic, and St. John's Lutheran.

Our eight churches are the sole survivors of some 22 churches and religious organizations that have been active in Mendota at one time or another during the past 100 years. Only these have endured the struggles and hardships of the early years, trials by fire and wars, and still remain to serve our present generation today.

Those years were not without their humorous and, at times, grim consequences. Such as the "antimonial" wine that was mistakenly served to members of the Methodist church in 1859 who were taking

communion at a quarterly meeting as was customary. All became ill with "billious attack." Peter Cartwright, presiding elder, remarked grimly that "it was the first time he ever knew of an attempt to vomit the devil out of the church."

And a tirade was conducted against bad boys who loitered around the door of the Methodist church after services . . . and later the same church sedately decided to install hitching posts so that church-goers would not have to tie their horses to Mr. Conkey's trees.

When the Baptists moved their church in 1869 while a new one was being built the workmen forgot to put supports under the floors. Just before services the floor gave way. Squire Guy of the Presbyterian church gallantly offered the use of their building for services.

All the churches took up collections in 1865 to aid white refugees, the northern sympathizers obliged to flee the South.

The Baptist church proudly summarized in 1867 that for ten years they had used an organ made by Mr. Tewksbury in his kitchen. Made in kitchen or workshop, Mr. Tewksbury was one to know how to build an organ, for he had at about this time a flourishing organ factory. The Baptist organ may have been his first.

The usual vicissitudes of the pioneer, so common to the first settlers of this community, were interwoven into the early life of these Mendota churches. Unfortunately, detailed records of all the churches are not available, yet much accurate information has been secured.

In 1853 Mendota was a little village with less than 100 inhabitants. Little is known of the religious life of the community in the years prior to that time, except the fact that traveling preachers and priests came here occasionally and held services for all who were interested.

When the village was first established there was no church in the entire area. So the Methodists, Baptists, Presbyterians and several other Protestant organizations began holding church services and Sunday School in the old school house located on the site of the present Library Park. This was a small building, only 25 by 45 feet in size, and faced the south. It is still in existence today, having been moved some years ago to Wisconsin Avenue and remodeled into a residence.

While the Protestants were meeting in the school house, Catholic priests from LaSalle, Peru and other nearby towns came to Mendota frequently and read mass in the homes of the Catholic people living here at that time. Separate services were held for both English and German speaking families, since many of the new settlers were immigrants from Germany and had not yet learned the English language. Until 1877, Mendota was under the Diocese of Chicago.

The first church building actually built was that of the Baptists,



in early 1854. The Methodists started to build the second church four years later to supplant meetings in the old school house, but their church was not completely ready until 1863, due to "labor and material shortages" caused by the war. But it was hailed as a model of architectural beauty, with expert work in graining the pews done by Dean and Shaw. The original church building is in existence today, many times enlarged and remodeled, soon to be replaced with a new building, and the congregation will honor its 100th anniversary in 1954.

St. Mary's Catholic parish was established in 1854. This was an Irish Catholic church. The Holy Cross German Catholic group was organized in 1858.

The fourth religious group to organize in Mendota was the Presbyterians. Their church was established in 1855 at a meeting held in the old school house in Library park, later meeting in the Library Hall.

Some time in 1857 or 1858 another group of Presbyterians organized what was known as the New School or Second Presbyterian church under the leadership of Rev. Barrett. They built a small church and conducted services in the building until June 23, 1866, when they disbanded and the entire congregation of 19 members united with the First Presbyterian church.

When the Presbyterian churches united, the Second Presbyterian church building was sold to the Universalist Society, which thrived for eight or ten years. Very little is remembered about this sect, as it was small and became inactive about 1875. History does record that Willard Graves donated a "large, rich-toned bell" to the church in 1867, and that a state convention of Universalists was held in Mendota in 1868.

Though disbanded, the surviving members of the Universalist Society erected a beautiful little chapel in the southwest corner of Restland cemetery. Although this chapel has not been used for many years, it still contains a beautiful pulpit Bible with gold lettering stating that it was a gift to the Universalist Society of Mendota from the Second Universalist Sabbath School of Chicago.

The German Lutheran church had its inception in the spring of 1858, stemming from settlements of German immigrants located in Perkins Grove and Knox Grove. Paster Hildebrand came to organize the German Protestants. After about a year and a half of meetings in a public hall they built a church which they occupied until 1867, this being replaced by a new one. The old church was removed to one side of the lot and used as a school house.

As construction on the new church neared completion in June of

1868, it was remarked in the press that the spire was the subject of many heavenward glances, what with workmen climbing up and down its sides, applying lightning rods, weather-vane with revolving rooster and points of the compass.

## TIME FOR A RHYME

The editor, admitting his poetical machine was out of gear, spun off a rhyme in a manner queer. Wrote he:

*Far above the spire  
There runs a wire —  
A lightning rod  
That runs up higher  
Than e'en church spire  
Which points to God.  
Way up in the sky  
The Winds will vie  
The Vane to turn;  
A Rooster high  
To wink her eye  
At N.E.W.S. so firm!  
That's the reason the people  
Upward gaze at the church steeple.*

The poet was apparently J. Snell, an Aurora man who had taken over the editorship of *The Bulletin* a few months before. Note his gender given the rooster. A week later the rooster was still good copy. The editor vowed he could not say whether the rooster undertook to crow, but he certainly saw it “lay” over to one side. The wind had turned it topsy-turvey so a workman had to go up on the steeple and set it right.

It was in the year 1862 that the pastor of the Perkins Grove Evangelical Circuit (German Methodist), Rev. Jacob Schaeffe, and his assistant, Rev. C. Gagstatter, began holding preaching services in Mendota. They continued until 1867 when a Mendota mission was organized with about 20 members and a resident pastor, Rev. M. Stamm. Next year a church was erected at Jefferson street and Indiana avenue, which later became the present Evangelical United Brethren church.

A tall spire “100 feet from the ground” was the finger pointing to God on top of the church of the Free-Will Baptists, built about 1866. Trustees were S. A. Schwarzs, George Hetzler, J. Carr, D. Tripp, and

J. Walters Jr. The society was short-lived; when they disbanded the building was converted into a residence and is now owned and occupied by George W. Nisley, at Seventh street and Fifth avenue.

Daily prayer meetings were held at Y.M.C.A. Hall on Washington street in 1867, indicating the existence of another religious group of that era.

The Episcopalians also had a group here at this same time. Services, apparently, were held in the Presbyterian church building.

Another denomination, known as the United Congregational and Lutheran churches, was active in 1867 and elected Rev. W. H. Wynn as their pastor. Their church was located on Indiana avenue between Jefferson and Monroe. A church building designated as "Cong. Ch" is indicated as standing north of the present Evangelical United Brethren church. The history of this church seems to be lost among the ever-changing alignments. The Turnvereins moved the building to Washington street on lot occupied by Purity Ice Cream, later remodeled as "Germania Opera House."

Another church which enjoyed a brief stay in the village was the Quakers (Society of Friends).

The Zion Baptist church for colored people was another. This group occupied a fair sized frame building at the corner of Lincoln avenue and Eighteenth street. It was probably built prior to 1874 and was still standing in 1893.

It is recalled by some old-timers that when meetings were discontinued in the colored Baptist church, many of their members worshipped at the First Baptist church.

An amusing incident is told about a group attending a colored wedding at this church. It seems the bridegroom failed to appear. It developed that he was employed as a dining car waiter on the railroad and some of his co-workers played a trick on him. He was taken to Chicago to testify on a trumped-up charge of a shortage of silverware on the diner. Consequently he did not arrive back in Mendota until the next day. The couple was not to be daunted. They went the next day to Chicago where they were married, free from pranksters.

At one time there were three Lutheran churches. The German Lutheran church, now known as St. John's Evangelical Lutheran, was one. A second was the Seminary Lutheran church, which first held services in Cooper's Hall in 1875. Their north side church was purchased for \$800 in 1879 by Prof. Richter who bid it in as a member of the Wartburg Seminary faculty. It went out of existence in 1889 when the seminary moved to Dubuque, Iowa. The building was purchased in 1892 by the Advent Christian denomination.

The third Lutheran congregation was the English Lutheran church. This seems to have been united with the Congregational church, described earlier, and they may have been one and the same, although the merger date is given as 1868. They probably relinquished their building to the Seminary Lutherans when they joined the Congregationalists on Indiana avenue.

In 1875 the United Brethren church was organized with nine members. They were: Daniel Fahler and wife, A. Shouk and wife, J. and Mrs. Billings, Archey Williams, and Rev. U. D. Wood and wife. The first pastor was Rev. J. G. Designer, who remained here until the autumn of 1876 when he was succeeded by Rev. C. Wendle. They purchased the church owned by the Universalist Society when it became inactive in 1875.

Another religious sect which had a brief existence in this community was the Church of God, sometimes known as the Winebrennarians. This was a small society which built a church in the north part of town in 1884. Their pastor in 1886 was Rev. Richmond. It is not known when this church disbanded, but its old building is still standing and used as an apartment house.

\* \* \*

It was written by *The Mendota Weekly Chronicle* in 1870 that "the spires of a town index its public spirit" and the item boasted the dozen or more churches. Mendota no longer has its dozen churches, and the spires get shorter and shorter due to the simple economics of building costs. But the eight churches existing have been strengthened by the hardships of the years. They are emerging into a new century that looks ahead to continued growth.

## MENDOTA METHODIST CHURCH

METHODISM HAD ITS BEGINNING in Mendota in March, 1854, when 12 local Methodists banded together under the leadership of Rev. John Webster, a minister from LaMoille, who frequently conducted services in the old school house.

In September, 1854, the Rev. U. P. Golliday was appointed as the first pastor of the new church by the Rock River Methodist Conference. Under his guidance the local church was re-organized and chartered as the Methodist Episcopal Church.

For several months the Methodists continued to worship in the old school house where all the Protestants met on the Sabbath, and then



moved to Hastings Hall where a Sunday School was organized by Rev. William Edwards, also a local preacher, who became its first superintendent.

No records are available for the first two years of the church, but when Rev. B. Lowe succeeded Rev. Golliday as pastor in 1856, he listed 60 members of the congregation.

The First Methodist Church building was erected in 1858 on land donated by John Hastings. This was at the corner of Sixth Avenue and Fifth Street and this church still stands today. Services were held in the basement during the first year until the building was completed in 1859. The church was formally dedicated by Dr. T. M. Eddy of Chicago on September 19, 1863.

At the time of its formal dedication, the church was under the leadership of Rev. James C. Cramb and had a membership of 85 persons. During the following two years the congregation was increased to 130 under the pastorate of Rev. J. Hartman.

On March 1, 1866, one Sunday evening after the regular services were concluded, a catastrophe almost occurred. A large chandelier containing six kerosene lamps fell from the ceiling and started a fire. Fortunately, no one was hurt and members of the congregation extinguished the fire with shawls and other wearing apparel.

In looking over the records of the next few years, one is immediately impressed with the achievements of Rev. Frank A. Hardin who took charge of the church in 1866. During the first year of his pastorate he increased the membership of the church to 200 persons. Rev. Hardin is credited with 185 probationers during the three years of his service with the church, a phenomenal record for those days.

Some time during the next few years, the seating capacity of the main auditorium was greatly increased with the addition of a gallery.

In 1873 the Rock River Conference of the Methodist Church was held in Mendota, which was considered quite an honor for this community. Bishop Matthew Simpson, an outstanding Methodist Bishop of the century, as well as personal friend and advisor of Abraham Lincoln, was the presiding bishop at this conference.

A year later the residence just east of the church building was purchased as a parsonage. It was used for this purpose until 1905 when it was sold and moved to another lot. The present parsonage was erected on this site in 1905.

Extensive remodeling of the church was undertaken in 1901 under the pastorate of Rev. Fred D. Stone, and this work was completed in April, 1902. In February, 1942, the building now known as the Church House was purchased. It is used by the Beginners and Primary De-

partment of the Sunday School, and for church meetings and social affairs.

On November 19, 1944, the Mendota Methodist Church celebrated its 90th Anniversary under the leadership of Rev. L. D. McGladrey who brought the membership up to 501 persons.

In preparation for the Church's centennial celebration in 1954, plans are now going forward for construction of a Sunday school and fellowship hall portion of a completely new edifice to replace the old church which has served so long and so well the needs of the Methodist people in Mendota.

Ministers who have served the church are U. P. Golliday 1854-1856; B. Lowe 1856-1858; Caleb Foster 1858-1860; W. C. Willing 1860-1862; James C. Cramb 1862-1864; J. Hartman 1864-1866; Frank A. Hardin 1866-1869; Nathan H. Axtel 1869-1871; D. J. Holmes 1871-1872; J. B. McGuffin 1872-1874; W. H. Smith 1874-1876; F. A. Read 1876-1879; J. W. Lee 1879-1881; C. A. Bucks 1881-1884; H. L. Martin 1884-1885; C. W. Thornton 1885-1887; J. A. J. Whipple 1887-1892; J. R. Hamilton 1892-1896; H. K. Vernon 1896-1898; R. L. Griffen 1898-1899; Fred D. Stone 1899-1903; W. C. Reuter 1903-1904; George H. Bennett 1904-1906; Roderick Murray 1906-1909; F. J. Milnes 1909-1910; T. P. Brannum 1910-1916; J. F. Anderson 1916-1917; W. L. Clapp 1917-1919; H. W. Dack 1919-1922; H. P. Barnes 1922-1926; James A. Wilson 1926-1930; C. J. Doenecke 1930-1935; R. E. Bethards 1935-1936; J. E. Robeson 1936-1940; Birger Dahl 1940-1942; Leslie McGladrey 1942-1946; Truman Potter 1946-1948; J. Richard Drees, 1948-1953; John Paul Stafford, 1953.

## FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH

THE FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH was organized in Mendota on October 28, 1854, at the home of Rev. Nathan Denison, a Baptist minister who had moved here from New York.

Rev. Denison and five other Baptists—Moses Dix, Reuben Spencer, Orson Waste, Richard Waste, and George A. Richmond — attended this first meeting. At an adjourned session held four days later, 11 other Baptists joined with them and completed the organization. Rev. Denison was elected as the first pastor of the new church.

On November 16, Baptist delegates from Paw Paw, LaMoille, LaSalle, Princeton and Granville met in the school house as a council of churches to recognize the new church.

Prior to the meeting of the council, however, Rev. Denison had been stricken with typhoid fever. He rapidly grew worse and died a few weeks later. On Thanksgiving Day morning the new church was left without a pastor.

No regular Baptist minister could be secured until May, 1855, when Rev. S. B. Gilbert of Clyde, New York, came to Mendota and became pastor of the church. At this time there was no church building in the village so the Baptists held services wherever a suitable place could be found. First, they met in the old school house, then in West's warehouse, then in a new building erected on North Main Street by W. S. Pomeroy, and finally in a new school house on the east side.

By this time the Baptist congregation had grown so large that plans were started for the erection of a church building. Lots had been donated to the church by T. B. Blackstone for a building site near Blackstone Park, but after due consideration it was thought advisable to change the location to the west side because the town was advancing more rapidly in that direction.

Mr. John West of Chicago was interviewed on the matter of a building site and he presented the lots at Monroe and Indiana where the Baptists erected the first church in Mendota. Mr. West also gave \$100 toward the building which was erected with much effort and sacrifice. One member, Deacon Spencer, even mortgaged his farm so that he might contribute to the building fund.

The First Baptist Church was completed in May, 1856, and for two years it was the only church building in the town. Rev. S. B. Gilbert remained as pastor for 14 years and during that time baptized 206 persons.

The Baptist congregation rapidly outgrew its first building and when Rev. W. M. Haigh followed Rev. Gilbert as pastor in 1869, plans were already under way for a new building. The little church in which they had been worshipping was moved to the back of the lot and a fine new church was built on the site.

This new church was the largest in the city at that time. It cost about \$20,000 with two tall and graceful spires. The bell alone cost \$1,000. The building was completed and dedicated in February, 1870, with Rev. Dr. Evarts, pastor of the First Baptist Church, Chicago, officiating.

On the day of the dedication, the temperature dropped to 10 degrees below zero. In spite of the weather, the new church was packed almost to capacity, and at the morning and evening services, the congregation over-subscribed the building fund. Enough was left over to purchase a fine bell for the tower.

In 1888, a great blow came to the church when the local organ factory was moved to Ottawa. Seventy-one members were lost in that one year. Sixty letters, including that of the pastor, Rev. Steadman, were granted at one time.

In 1904, under the leadership of Rev. Annable, the church building which had served the congregation 34 years, was remodeled to serve 38 years more.

On March 11, 1942, a fire of unknown origin broke out and the old church was burned to the ground. Practically the only thing saved from the fire was the pulpit Bible.

Shortly after the fire, Rev. Kenneth W. Sollitt became pastor of the church. The congregation continued to meet in the Masonic Temple Hall, and in spite of handicaps, grew and prospered. It was not until eight years later, however, that a new church was completed. During these years both the membership and attendance of the church more than doubled.

The present First Baptist Church — the newest church edifice in Mendota — is located on the same site of the building destroyed by fire. The corner stone was laid on October 30, 1949, and the building completed and dedicated on September 10, 1950.

Pastors who have served the church are Nathan Denison 1854; S. B. Gilbert 1854-1869; W. M. Haigh 1869-1874; T. T. Potter 1874-1875; T. M. Colwell 1875-1878; R. L. Colwell 1878-1881; W. H. Steadman 1882-1888; Simeon Hussey 1888-1890; Hector C. Leland 1890-1892; Fred R. Swarthout 1893-1896; Joseph H. Beaven 1896-1899; George N. Ballantine 1899-1902; C. A. Boughton 1902-1904; E. W. Annable 1904-1908; George Yule 1909-1913; A. C. Watson 1914-1916; J. B. McKendry 1916-1918; R. T. Gassoway 1919-1921; C. T. Goodsell 1921-1924; Rodney C. Martin 1924-1925; E. W. Annable 1926-1929; V. H. MacNeill 1930-1936; E. I. Sturkie 1937-1938; Eugene C. Anderson 1938-1942; Kenneth W. Sollitt 1943 to present.

## HOLY CROSS CATHOLIC CHURCH

THE HOLY CROSS CATHOLIC CHURCH represents the amalgamation of the two original Catholic parishes in Mendota which took place on May 7, 1931. St. Mary's Parish, the oldest, traces its beginning to 1854, while Holy Cross Parish was established here in 1858. Prior to 1877 both parishes were part of the Diocese of Chicago.

The old St. Mary's Parish dates back to 1854 when Father Anthony, who was then stationed as pastor of St. Patrick's Parish in



LaSalle, administered to the spiritual needs of the English speaking Catholics of Mendota and surrounding communities. Early in 1858, Father Refurner assumed the duties of Father Anthony, carrying on the missionary activity in this locality.

In the summer of 1858, Father J. P. Murphy was assigned as the first resident pastor of St. Mary's. Plans for a new church were made and the foundation laid in that year. In 1859 the church was completed and occupied by the parish. It was a frame building located at the south end of Sixth Avenue.

Although the old St. Mary's Church (Irish Catholic) was remodeled and enlarged several times over the years, the parish met there continuously until June 19, 1935, when the two parishes were consolidated and held services in the new Holy Cross Catholic Church which was dedicated on that day.

Father Murphy, the first pastor of St. Mary's, worked diligently to raise funds for the new church, even visiting railroad construction camps and reading Mass for the workers. His time here was short, however, as he passed away early in 1860.

No pastor was definitely assigned to St. Mary's until the advent of Father J. P. Fitzpatrick in August, 1861. In the interim, St. Mary's was again served by visiting priests out of Aurora and other points, among them being Father Michael Clark of Amboy.

Father Fitzpatrick remained as pastor until March, 1863, when he was succeeded by Father James Maher who died after only one month of service. From March 29 to May 6, pending the appointment of a successor, Father M. O'Sullivan of Aurora administered to members of the parish.

Father Thomas O'Farrell was the next pastor and remained until September, 1876. He was not only pastor of St. Mary's, but also administered to the needs of the Catholics east of Mendota, in and around Earlville, saying Mass in private homes there, and later in the town hall. During his pastorate here, he built a church at Arlington for the people of that community.

Father M. Heafy served as pastor from September, 1876 to April, 1888. During his administration, St. Mary's Parochial School was built on the lot one block north of the church, at the corner of Sixth Avenue and Second Street. The school was conducted by the Sisters of Mercy from Ottawa. Also while here, he built St. Teresa's Church at Earlville.

In May, 1888, Father P. Sheedy took over the parish and continued as pastor until September, 1897, when he was transferred to Utica.

Father James T. Heaney, who came to St. Mary's in 1898, remained as pastor for nearly 20 years. While here he also had Earlville and Leland under his charge. He remodeled and decorated the church at Earlville and also established a new parish at Dimmick.

During the pastorate of Father Heaney, St. Mary's Parochial School was abandoned because of lack of pupils and sufficient funds to carry on. The building was later demolished. Also during this time Father Heaney procured assistants to aid him with his work in the new parishes out of Mendota.

Having an assistant pastor here meant the need for a larger rectory, so a new building was erected for this purpose in 1898. The church was also remodeled and enlarged a few years later.

Rev. William J. Cleary succeeded Father Heaney in 1917 and remained as pastor here until May 20, 1919.

Rev. H. Vincent O'Brien was the next pastor and remained until the amalgamation of the two parishes and the erection of the new Holy Cross Parish in May, 1931. During his pastorate, he also remodeled and enlarged the church at Dimmick.

The first priest ordained from St. Mary's was Father Thomas Daniel Coyne, C.M., who was ordained on June 9, 1911. Later, Father James McDonald, C.S.C., was ordained on June 27, 1924, and celebrated his first Solemn Mass in the church on June 29 of that year.

\* \* \*

The old Holy Cross Parish (German Catholic) traces its earliest beginnings back to the period 1852 to 1854 when visiting priests administered to the needs of the German speaking Catholics in this area. It was hoped that when St. Mary's Church was built in 1859 that the German speaking people would naturally affiliate with this parish. However, the fast increasing German population, the desire to continue the German language, and the desire to establish a church on the west side, inspired this group to maintain another parish.

Accordingly, visiting priests continued to say Mass in homes and in some business locations, at one time in a frame building on Washington Street.

The Church of the Holy Cross was first organized in the old school house, about 1858, with 17 families as members of the parish. The organizing priest was Father Murphy who had also organized the Irish Catholics (St. Mary's) in 1854.

In 1859 a new public school was built in Library Park, and its predecessor, a long narrow frame building, was purchased by the German Catholics of the community. The old school house was

moved to the rear of the present Holy Cross lot, parallel to the alley facing west on Michigan Avenue, to be used as a church.

From 1859 to 1861, visiting priests held services in this church, among them being Father Fasbender of Peru, and Father Michael Clark of Amboy.

The first Holy Cross Parochial School was established in the late 50's in a building located at what is now 1002 North Main Street. It was taught by a man schoolmaster, strict and somewhat harsh, as was the custom of the period.

Late in 1861, Father T. Westkamp became the first resident pastor of the Holy Cross Parish. A frame house two doors west of the present church on Jefferson Street was used as the Rectory.

Shortly after becoming pastor, Father Westkamp set plans to build a larger church to accommodate the fast-growing parish. Although the building was started in 1863, the Civil War was then in progress, and the work was slow.

Two valued employees — Peter Reichardt and Michael Riegel — were drafted into the Union Army, but it is known that a Mr. Schneck, a Mr. Kortic, Mr. Henry Zolper I, and Mr. Gerhardt Yohn worked on the construction.

However, the new church was sufficiently completed for occupancy late in 1864. While the plastering was not done until 1868, it was dedicated in 1864. It was a large brick structure, costing about \$8,000, which was quite a big sum for a church in those years, with Father Cronaur as priest.

The old Main Street Parochial School, which had been transferred into the old church building, was moved to the rear of the new edifice and established as a school. The Sisters of St. Francis of Joliet were placed in charge.

About 1870 the building was moved to the site of the present school to make room for an addition to the Church. A circular sanctuary was added to the Church. The building was later used as a residence but has since been sold and moved.

Father Westkamp was succeeded by Father X. Nigh, who remained in charge until the spring of 1867. Father Edward Hermann was appointed in charge of the parish in June, 1867 and remained until April, 1870. Father Leander Shaffner was then sent to Holy Cross and served until February, 1871 when Father Hermann returned and remained until September, 1871. He was succeeded by Father C. T. Neiderberger from October, 1871 until September, 1875; Father Wagner from September, 1875 until the summer of 1876. Father Justin Cronauer became Pastor in August, 1876 and served contin-

uously for a period of nearly 25 years, passing away while Pastor, on May 2, 1900.

In May, 1900, Rev. Hugo Tholen was appointed and served until October, 1911. During his pastorate, the Franciscan Sisters from Milwaukee assumed the care of the pupils of Holy Cross School.

Father Edward Jacobs succeeded Father Tholen in the fall of 1911. During his pastorate, the present brick Holy Cross School Building was erected in 1913 on the present location with living quarters for the Sisters in the school building. At the opening of the new school, the Dominican Sisters from Springfield, Illinois, assumed direction of the pupils enrolled and this Order of splendid teachers has been maintained in charge of Holy Cross School up to the present date.

In May, 1921, Father Jacobs, who was in failing health, was succeeded by Father W. F. Selk, who remained as Pastor until the amalgamation of the two former parishes and the erection of the new Holy Cross Church in May, 1931.

\* \* \*

Father Leo J. Wissing was appointed Pastor of the new amalgamated parish and on December 14, 1947 was elevated to a Very Reverend Monsignor.

The following Priests have been ordained from this Parish: Rev. Dominic A. Konen, Rev. Leo P. Henkel, Rev. Leo L. Henkel, Rev. Victor C. Henkel, Rev. James MacDonald, Rev. Thomas D. Coyne, Rev. Dale Kratz, Rev. Vincent Fitzgerald, O.M.I., Rev. Leo Joerger, S.V.D., Rev. Dale Maloy.

The following have entered the Convent: Sr. M. Scholastica Weber, O.S.F., deceased; Sr. M. Anicia Reckinger, O.S.F.; S. M. Victorine Bromenschenkel, O.S.F.; Sr. M. Madeleine Henkel, O.S.B.; Sr. M. Agnetis Frey, O.S.B.; Sr. M. Edmund Boyle, O.S.B.; Sr. M. Regis Sondgeroth, O.P.; Sr. M. Verona Schmitt, O.S.B.; Sr. M. Thomas More Fitzgerald, O.P.; Sr. M. Dominic Joerger, O.P.; Sr. M. Blaise Galloway, O.P.; Sr. M. Emerick, O.P.; Sr. M. Concepta Joerger, O.P.

\* \* \*

There hung in the old St. Mary's Catholic church a beautiful painting "Christ Delivering the Keys to Peter," painted by Miss Ella Corbus, artist. This was won by D. C. Wright in a drawing. A group of adherents tried to buy the picture for the church. Mr. and Mrs. Wright wouldn't sell it but donated it to the church in July, 1879. The historic painting has been preserved and now hangs in the music room at Holy Cross school.



# FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

THE FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH was organized on August 26, 1855 in the old school house located in Library Park. The first five charter members were: William Smith, James McDowell, Anna J. Smith, Hannah B. Fisk, and Mrs. Sarah Scullen.

Organization of the new church was completed by Rev. C. R. Fisk of the Chicago Presbytery, and Rev. John Fleming, Presbyterian missionary for this area.

The first pastor was Rev. James S. Henderson who came to Mendota in June, 1856, and remained until 1861 when his death occurred.

When the church was first organized the congregation worshipped in the old school house for a short time and then later in Library Hall.

In 1856, they built a house of worship at the corner of Fifth Street and Tenth Avenue on lots donated by T. B. Blackstone. This was a frame building with steeple costing about \$3,500 and seating about 350 persons.

On June 23, 1866, 19 members were received from the Second Presbyterian Church which had disbanded their organization and shortly after sold their church building.

The Second Presbyterian Church had been organized in 1857 under the leadership of Rev. Barrett. They built a small church on the East Side and conducted services in the building until they united with the First Presbyterians. The former church building was sold to the Universalist Society.

Prior to November, 1866, an extension of 24 feet had been added to the First Presbyterian Church, making an addition of 24 pews.

Records show that the early Presbyterians were very strict concerning church attendance and personal conduct. Members were called before the session for non-attendance, and one of the rules of the Order of Business was the receiving of absentee excuses. Resolutions were also passed against participation in worldly amusements, especially promiscuous dancing.

On Saturday morning, October 23, 1897, the First Presbyterian Church building was burned to the ground. Immediately after the destruction of the building, several churches and organizations came forward offering the use of their buildings. The invitation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church was accepted and services held there the following Sunday by Rev. Theodore Allen.

Later it was decided to hold the church and Christian Endeavor meetings in the Opera House and the prayer meetings in the homes of members until a new church could be built.

As soon as the insurance could be adjusted and the amount of \$3,070 received for the loss, a congregational meeting was called on November 15 to make plans for a new building. On March 24, plans for the structure were approved by the church.

The present church was completed and dedicated on the site of the old church on December 18, 1898, with services lasting the entire day.

In 1907 the old pipe organ, which had been reconditioned after going through the fire, was sold and replaced by a handsome Estey pipe organ.

During the pastorate of Rev. G. A. Pollock a fine manse of 12 rooms was erected on the adjoining lot in 1876.

Pastors who have served the church are James S. Henderson 1855-1861; R. C. Colmery 1861-1869; R. C. Swinton 1869-1870; S. W. Weller 1871-1876; N. S. Dickey 1876-1877; G. A. Pollock 1878-1891; T. H. Allen 1891-1906; Stado A. Muneke 1907-1910; F. O. Hellier 1910-1913; J. A. G. Waits 1913-1920; J. T. Hood 1920-1923; A. M. Eells 1923-1925; W. B. Townsend 1925-1929; E. B. Landis 1930-1934; J. W. Goodpasture 1934-1942; G. F. Shepherd 1942-1945; A. W. Rideout 1945-1946; Wilbert E. Hare 1946 to present.

## ST. JOHN'S EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

KNOWN THEN AS THE German Lutheran Church, this congregation first assembled in the spring of 1858 in a public hall, with 35 members. Rev. Hildebrand who represented settlers from Saxe-Coburg and Resse-Darmstadt in Germany, was the pastor. In the year following the corner lot now occupied by the church was given by T. Blackstone. A small church was built, which gave way in 1867 for a larger edifice, the old church being used as a church school.

Among the organizers and early members of the church were: Daniel Meisenbach, Fred Larck, Simon Schuetz, J. Jacob, Nick Eckert, Frank Meisenbach, William Faust, F. Stief, Peter Kreis, C. Fischer, William Schultz, Henry Oettinger, Karl Zapf, George Friedrich, George P. Reichardt, Paul Faber, Dietrich Volk, N. Holland, Jacob Fritz, Jacob Schneller, J. N. Gross, Casper Ruedy, Fred Bieser, J. G. Fischer, Max A. F. Haass, George Marr, Fred Wilhelm, Ludwig Scheidenhelm, Emil Haass, J. Theuer, J. Keil, and John Hartan.

The first officers of record were Daniel Meisenbach, president; Jacob Fritz, secretary; and Mr. Braeuning, treasurer.

The early members were greatly interested in maintaining a German school, which flourished until German was made a regular course of study in Blackstone school in 1874.

Largely through the efforts of Rev. Bredow, of Dubuque, Iowa, a pioneer of the Iowa Synod, the congregation affiliated with that synod in 1866. The Lutheran cemetery was platted in 1866.

The church was remodeled and greatly enlarged in 1895, and in 1903 the present parsonage was built.

Services were preached in German until 1912, when regular services in English were introduced. Services were conducted in both languages until about a decade ago.

Adjoining property was bought in 1931, and in 1933 the modern parish house was erected and opened. Construction on the new church got under way and in 1935 the cornerstone was laid, with dedication on March 29 the following year.

The present membership comprises 960 confirmed, 1250 baptized, and 319 enrolled in Sunday school.

The church looks forward to its Centennial in 1958.

The pastors who have served over the years: Pastors Hildebrand, Schaefer and Werner in succession from 1858-1861; Th. Borsch 1862-1863; Chr. Ganz 1863-1865; J. Schmeiser 1865-1866; J. Haeckel 1866-1869; L. Nabholz substituted for several months; J. G. Ade 1869-1877; Fr. Hempelmann 1877-1879; Fr. Richter 1879-1894; Carl Proehl 1894-1914; F. H. Voelker 1912-1923; A. W. Engelbrecht 1924-1947; Gerhard Doerman 1947-1949; Albert Heidmann 1949 to present.

## EVANGELICAL UNITED BRETHREN CHURCH

THE EVANGELICAL UNITED BRETHREN CHURCH represents the consolidation of two of Mendota's oldest churches — the Zion Evangelical Church established in 1867, and the United Brethren Church which was organized in 1875.

The earliest beginning of this church dates back to 1862 when the pastor of the Perkins Grove German Evangelical Circuit, and his assistant, Rev. C. Gagstatter, began holding preaching services in Mendota. They continued this work until 1867, when the German Evangelical

Church was organized here with 16 members, and Rev. M. Stamm installed as local pastor.

For the first year following organization, the congregation held services in the old school house and later in private homes.

In 1868, a new church edifice was erected at the corner of Jefferson Street and Indiana Avenue, the present location of the consolidated church. It was dedicated as the Zion Evangelical Church on October 18 with Bishop Esher, officiating. The building was Gothic style, 34 by 52 feet, surmounted by a neat tower.

The entire cost of the building and grounds was \$5,700. At that time the congregation had only 20 members, so the fact that they raised \$4,000 to pay for the building and sustain a minister is worthy of special mention here.

The first Board of Trustees consisted of J. Nicolai, Enos Stark, M. Hauch, Moses Eby, and P. Benter. The second pastor was Rev. J. G. Kleinknecht who succeeded Rev. Stamm shortly after the new church was built.

Over the years the congregation enjoyed a steady growth and toward the end of the century found that the church building was too small. In 1900, a new edifice was erected on the same site and this building is still used by the congregation today. The present parsonage was built in 1906.

In 1946, the Evangelical and United Brethren churches were merged and the church became known as the Evangelical United Brethren.

In 1949, extensive repairs were made to the church building, the chancel was changed and a new electronic organ installed.

The present Trustee Board is composed of E. G. Feik, K. N. Erbes, Amos Buck, Elmer Maus and Lloyd Doenier.

Ministers who have served the church from the beginning are: Rev. M. Stamm, Rev. J. G. Kleinknecht, Rev. W. Strassburger, Rev. J. Kurtz, Rev. A. Knobel, Rev. I. Kuter, Rev. C. Lindeman, Rev. J. Himmel, Rev. J. Schaeffe, Rev. W. Goessele, Rev. A. W. Strickfaden, Rev. J. J. Lintner, Rev. W. C. Frey, Rev. A. J. Boelter, Rev. J. B. Elfrink, Rev. Ph. Beuscher, Rev. E. Burgi, Rev. J. G. Schwab, Rev. H. B. Schaeffer, Rev. G. W. Engelter, Rev. E. G. Vaubel, Rev. W. A. Stauffer, Rev. John F. Schaefer, Rev. R. A. Render, Rev. W. J. Dauner, Rev. W. A. Giese and Rev. F. J. Unger.

The United Brethren Church, which is part of the Evangelical United Brethren Church today, was organized in 1875 with nine members. The members of the first congregation were: Daniel Fahler



and wife, A. Shouk and wife, J. and Mrs. Billings, Archey Williams, and Rev. U. D. Wood and wife.

The first pastor was the Rev. J. G. Designer, who remained until the autumn of 1876, when he was succeeded by Rev. C. Wendle. At that time the church had a membership of about 50 persons, and a Sunday School of over 100 scholars.

When it was first organized, the United Brethren purchased the church occupied by the Universalist Society when that group was disbanded. The church building of the United Brethren was later sold to a private party and taken down.

## ADVENT CHRISTIAN CHURCH

ON A MENDOTA CITY MAP which bears the date of 1874 is shown a church building with the words "Luth. Church". The date of erection of the building is not shown but is believed to have been erected prior to 1870. It was owned by the organization which operated it as a place of worship by the Wartburg Seminary for their faculty and students. At that time the Seminary occupied a large three-story and basement building on the site of the present high school. Shortly before 1892 both the seminary and the church were left vacant by the removal of the seminary to Dubuque.

Sometime during 1892 both the seminary building and the vacant Lutheran church on Illinois avenue were purchased by the Advent Christian denomination, the former to be used as a college and the latter as a church for the faculty and students of the newly established "Mendota College".

When purchased by the Adventists the church building consisted of a single-room frame structure, without basement. The limestone foundation walls extended but a few inches above the ground level. The building was heated by two large "cannonball" stoves placed near the entrance, with long stove pipes leading well toward the pulpit end of the church, into two brick chimneys one on either side of the structure. Oil-burning bracket lamps furnished the only light for the building at night. The windows were of the rectangular variety with square tops, glazed with small clear-glass panes.

As originally erected the building had a tall pointed steeple, beneath which was a very fine bell. The seating of the auditorium

consisted of straight-backed walnut pews. Before the building was purchased by the Adventists, both the bell and the walnut pews had been removed. To remove the bell a large hole was cut in the ceiling of the "vestibule" of the church, which was still open when taken over by the new congregation.

Soon after the purchase the Adventists made extensive repairs and purchased new seating for the auditorium. The first preaching service was held on April 23, 1893.

During the year of 1904 the foundation was raised and a portion of the basement excavated to accommodate a heating plant. At the same time an addition was erected to the north of the original building, affording an additional assembly room and two Sunday school class rooms. As a part of the improvement the ceilings of the main auditorium were raised and new lighting fixtures installed combining electricity and gas-burning fixtures. A new and higher pulpit was erected in the southeast corner of the auditorium. The windows were changed to the present gothic topped frames and glazed with cathedral glass.

The church was again remodeled and enlarged in 1921, increasing the number of rooms to 14 including the two assembly rooms. Basement rooms were excavated and cemented and a cement baptistry constructed.

## COLLEGE MOVED TO AURORA

The removal of the college to Aurora and the combination of the weekly denomination paper *Our Hope* with the denominational paper published in Boston, made material inroads in the membership of the church and in the size of the congregation, from which the church has not fully recovered.

Through a number of bequests a sizable endowment fund has been built, which produces regular income to combine with tithes and offerings from members. The church observes only the first day of the week for services. Mid-week prayer meetings are held Wednesday evenings.

The roll call of pastors of the Advent Christian church from 1893 to 1953 includes J. F. Adair, N. P. Cook, J. August Smith, F. A. Baker, Andrew Armour, C. F. Ladd, B. Forester, J. M. Dick, G. E. Coopridge, W. J. Davis, C. H. Woodward, E. F. Hurd, R. L. Peterson, J. A. Woodworth, Eric Lewis, C. A. Sampson, A. W. Brooks, W. Z. Dial, and the current pastor, Myron W. Buker.

# NAZARENE CHURCH

SOME YEARS AGO, the exact date of which is unknown, the Northwestern Illinois District of the Nazarene Church sent an evangelistic team to Mendota for the purpose of conducting a revival meeting in this area. Services were held in a tent on Route 34 near the present water storage tank.

From this meeting a total of 12 members joined the Nazarene Church and continued to hold services in a store building near the Faber Hotel. The next meeting place was in the store building east of the telegraph office.

The group later secured a corner lot at Fourth avenue and Fifth street where they fitted up a basement. Here they have held services for the past six years, pending eventual completion of their church. The Rev. David Van Gunten is pastor.





## THE MENDOTA THAT SLUMBERS

THERE ARE MANY who find surcease from life's tempestuous pressures by wandering quietly through graveyards. They say they find a quiet repose in reading headstones, looking for burial places of the great or near-great of bygone periods.

This is true of the Mendota cemeteries and while one may have to search with some diligence to find them, there are a number of interesting epitaphs and inscriptions. A suitable time to wander through the Mendota that Sleeps might be in the spring, when the vast lilac hedge which borders the cemetery along the western boundary is in full and fragrant bloom. Or in the autumn, when the colorful leaves drift down to lay nature's own wreath on the graves of those who have gone before.

If the wind is blowing, you will hear sighs from the row of pine trees that borders the cemetery . . . sighs of memory for the many who quietly sleep there, some of them beneath headstones with death dates antedating the establishment of the cemetery itself. You may stop to decipher some of the quaint, weather-beaten stones.

Or you may run across the grave of one Dan Conklin who was an employee with the Pawnee Bill wild west circus which showed in Mendota in 1903. During a storm he was accidentally hit with a falling tent pole and killed. The employees of the circus erected an appropriate headstone to mark his grave. Conklin had been a scout with John C. Fremont and Kit Carson.

The oldest stone noted in a quest through the cemeteries was John Connell, who died in 1848 — 105 years ago. "We part to meet again" is the simple inscription on this stone.

The monument to the Rev. Nathan Denison, the first pastor of the Baptist church who died in 1854, is designed to represent a pulpit with a closed Bible, and upon that a closed Psalter.

There is an interesting inscription on one side of a tall shaft erected for Willard Graves, who two years before his death in 1875 presented the library association with the proceeds of the sale of a farm and who also gave a deed to the library building and lot, the entire donation being valued at about \$6,000. The epitaph says, simply:

*"As I am now  
So you must be,  
In life prepare  
To follow me"*

Another most interesting stone is that marking the grave of Andrew Ralph. The inscription states he was a native of County Down, in Ireland, who emigrated to America in the year 1818 and who died in 1852. The scripture of Mary at the sepulchre is inscribed thereon.

\* \* \*

The wanderer through the Restland cemetery may be intrigued with a comparatively modern stone marking the grave of James Curtis Coleman, who died in 1921. Mr. Coleman, a power company lineman, lost his life when he came in contact with a high tension electric power line while assisting in the moving of a building near Troy Grove.

A design at the top of the stone shows two power line poles with power lines stretched from cross-bar to cross-bar. One of the wires is broken and hanging down, signifying death.

\* \* \*

The first burials after Mendota was founded took place in the area occupied by the Blackstone school playground. Most of the bodies were afterwards exhumed and transferred to the Restland cemetery. Many of the earliest residents were interred on their own lots, the bodies being removed to the new cemetery when it was opened. An early history gives this date as 1856, although the records show that in June, 1865, certain inhabitants of the town subscribed \$25 each to purchase ten acres of land for a cemetery plot. In the years since 25 additional acres were purchased.

A township collector of the early 1870's, Dorsey C. Andress, gave half of his commissions to build a plank walk from the city to the cemetery. The walk to the cemetery was a favorite pastime in the early days.

Many old-timers remember the band stand that was located along the main drive. Many walked to the cemetery to decorate the graves of their departed ones, then listened to a band concert and speaker of the day.

## RESTLAND SUBSCRIBERS

The original subscribers to the Restland cemetery included Charles H. Gilman, James Aiken, O. D. F. Conkey, John J. West, Justus Tower, W. T. Black, J. C. Corbus, W. Pearce, Isaac Ruedy, James Dawson, William Scott, D. C. Wright, James Kenworthy, Posley Stone, G. L. Blanchard, P. L. Porter, G. Morrison, Daniel Fillett, George Johnson, Thomas Imus, J. L. Liscom, John Faulk, Samuel Hastings, J. H. Harris, C. L. Adams, William Moore, Henry Planton, and G. M. Thayer.

William Gilman was the first president, and William Black was treasurer. They acted to see that fences were erected around the property. Samuel Hastings was appointed treasurer and also secretary, an office he held through 1902.

In the early days the drives through the cemetery were called streets and alleys. E. P. Cook and Justus Tower were appointed to plant trees and to make repairs on the tenant house. In 1887 it was voted to move the old house, now occupied as a residence, to the southwest corner of the cemetery. It was also voted to build a house for the caretaker, cost not to exceed \$800.

The main driveway was graveled with 40 carloads of gravel in 1890. E. P. Cook was president and he held this position until his death.

A Ladies Cemetery Improvement association was formed in 1890 to improve and beautify those parts of the cemetery for which no special provision was made. Their greatest contribution was the beautiful entrance gate.

In 1900 a committee comprised of Mrs. E. F. Hempstead, Mrs. T. F. A. Newport, and Mrs. P. H. Cooper, representing this association, offered to pay half the cost of having the cemetery raked and cleared of rubbish early each spring. This was continued until 1906 when the society was discontinued.

Also in 1900 a committee superintended removal of the cemetery dwelling to the southeast corner of the grounds.

The surviving members of the Universalist Society of Mendota erected a chapel on the ground recently occupied by the cottage as a memorial building for the Universalists.

City water mains were laid in the cemetery in 1908. In 1911 Bernard Katzwinkel took over as superintendent of Restland which continued until 1924. In 1927 he was elected president of the cemetery association, an office he held until his death in 1948.

The soldiers' monument standing between the old and new cemeteries was designed by Henry Eby and erected by the Woman's Relief Corps, which disbanded in the late 1920's.

The number of graves in Restland is estimated to be 7,000.

\* \* \*

The Lutheran cemetery was begun in December, 1866, when at a cost of \$200 two acres were purchased from Willard Graves. The deed was made to Casper Fischer, Peter Kreis, George Hafner, Simon Schuetz, and Nicholas Eckert, trustees of the St. John's Evangelical Lutheran church of Mendota.

\* \* \*

St. Mary's Catholic cemetery was established about 1876, when the first registration of burial was John Skeffington.

The German Catholic cemetery, containing three acres, was deeded to Rt. Rev. James Duggan, Bishop of Chicago and his successors in office, on March 20, 1895. Holy Cross church, Mendota, with the permission of Rt. Rev. John L. Spalding, Bishop of Peoria, consecrated this cemetery. Sponsors were John Goedtner, Michael Leffleman, George Burkart, and Joseph Fritz.

Holy Cross and St. Mary's cemeteries were amalgamated and incorporated in State of Illinois under the title of Holy Cross Cemetery association of Mendota, on January 8, 1942.



## A LODGING FOR THE NIGHT

**I**F YOU HAD BEEN a youngster in Mendota just before the turn of the century you would have been awed by the presence of a somewhat fearful, tumble-down building at about Fifth street east of the railroad tracks. It was said to be haunted. The steps were rotted out and the doors hung askew on a single hinge. Bats took over the third floor and only the bravest of the children ventured to explore the interior.

The building had lately been the domicile of some of the town's poorer families, who had moved in claiming squatter's rights. But its decadent and sieve-like condition had been too much, even for them.

This rotting hulk was all that remained of a once glorious hotel, famous in Mendota's early history. It was one of the earliest inns, known as the Wheeler House. The word "House" seemed to have been the grand term of the era, used so frequently to designate Mendota hostelries.

Few facts remain today about the Wheeler House, but one account states that September 20, 1866, F. G. Krueger, one of Mendota's first settlers, had returned from Europe to open a new hotel in a large building on Railroad street, lately known as the Wheeler House. "No liquor will be kept and it will be known as the Great Western Hotel," the account stated.

Railroad street was the street that extends along the east side of the railroad tracks, south from Sixth street. The hotel stood about a block south of what is now the Mendota Trouser factory. It was a three-story frame structure with a huge veranda running across the

front of the building. The doors opened directly into the foyer and the stairway wound its way up the three flights from the center of the building.

The Great Western Hotel was the stopping place for families of immigrants who traveled in wagons en route to Iowa and Minnesota.

\* \* \*

What was probably Mendota's first hotel was erected during the summer of 1853 by John Kelly. He named it The Mendota House. It stood on the corner of Main and Sixth street where the Star gas station is now located. Kelly ran this establishment for two years and then sold to a Mrs. Shedd. The Mendota House was by far the best known and remembered early hostelry.

Here, early settlers could get room and board. If the family came along, a suite of sorts could be rented. These suites were partitioned off with curtains that could hardly be called sound-proof, but the curtains provided a privacy of sorts.

The Mendota House was also the favorite hotel for the farmers who came to the city from nearby villages and farms to do their trading and to have their grain ground at the flour mills. These trips usually took more than a day and the Mendota House was their stopping place.

An unsupported legend has it that Abraham Lincoln slept here one night on one of his trips to Northern Illinois.

There is another story, about Mrs. Lincoln, that is of passing interest. Mrs. Lincoln had a friend who lived in Mendota. The friend was proud of the acquaintance, and whenever she had a letter from Mrs. Lincoln the entire neighborhood quickly knew of its contents.

One day the friend of Mrs. Lincoln was all agog. Her latest letter contained word from Mrs. Lincoln "that if she didn't go to Europe that summer she would come to Mendota to visit." Europe must have won out. The neighbors heard no more of the proposed visit and Mrs. Lincoln was never seen in Mendota.

## TRAGEDY IN THE NIGHT

Tragedy struck the Mendota House on the 30th of May in 1866. A stranger from Indiana, one Herman Holm, was stricken in the hotel with a severe seizure. Dr. Edwards was summoned, and after questioning the patient learned that he had taken what he had thought to be powdered charcoal, a favorite dyspepsia remedy of the time. The powder turned out to be "horse antimony," a potion he had purchased in Chicago. All medical arts availed nought, and he died the same

evening. His father came from Indiana to claim the remains to take back home for burial along the banks of the Wabash.

The hotel was abandoned in the final years of the old century. It had served its purpose and other and larger hotels were here to take its place.

\* \* \*

There were many hotels in the first few years of Mendota's existence. Some of them didn't last very long. Such a one was Reed's Hotel and Lamb's Hotel, standing side by side. Both met an inglorious end by burning in 1862.

Then there was a Valley House which stood on the corner of Jefferson and Illinois streets. It was run by George Frey.

Another was the Traveller's Home, on east Sixth street. Also on the east side of the tracks was the Railroad House with rooms to be had at \$1.50 a day, board included.

The Warner House which burned in the big fire of 1871 was rebuilt the following year. This hotel still stands. After passing through various ownerships it was remodeled in the early 30's by James Ellis and named the Ellis Hotel, now operated by J. E. King.

Another early inn was the Eagle Hotel. By 1860 it had already degenerated to a mere tenement and considered an old building. It was badly damaged in the New Year's eve fire of 1868.

In 1870 the Gilson Hotel opened its doors to the public. This stood on the corner of Railroad and Sixth streets. The hotel was taken over in 1873 by R. B. Potter and renamed the St. James Hotel. This was a popular place for traveling men, and it is said that when Mr. Potter took it over he refitted and refurnished the place throughout. This hotel later became the Illinois Hotel, and was operated for many years by Kate Sacks.

Then there was the Pohl hotel built by G. Pohl in about 1854. It was called the German House and ran until 1867 when it was removed to make room for a new brick building.

The Humboldt House was built and operated by John Hess on the lot just north of Virgil's shoe repair shop.

\* \* \*

The Germania Hotel was another early hotel. It was a two-story frame structure located north of the present Virgil Shoe Repair shop. It was operated by George and Adam Frey. Some of the permanent guests were employees of the Henning Brewery, and old-timers remember these men with their high leather boots. About 1889, when most of the members of the Mendota fire company were attending a firemen's tournament at Clinton, Illinois, fire broke out. The volunteer firemen

remaining in town had considerable trouble in keeping the fire under control. Some of the second story guests made their escape by grasping an iron pipe that carried the hotel signboard, thus swinging to safety on the ground.

The early hotel keepers had their share of excitement. Something was always happening to make the news headlines, John Zullich, who was boarding at the Humboldt House run by John Hess was attacked by a stranger one night in September, 1863. The assailant was thought to have aroused himself from his sleep on the hay in the barn back of the hotel to commit the deed. The dying John Zullich was questioned but he knew of no motive and could only tell the authorities that the man had struck him a heavy blow and departed quickly. Zullich died that day and the mystery has never been solved.

\* \* \*

For many years the pride of Mendota's inns was the depot hotel. Its real name was the Illinois Central Hotel, but it was more commonly known simply as the "Passenger House". This hotel was erected during the winter of 1853 and 1854 and opened its doors for business in May, 1854. Mr. Pelton was the first manager.

The passenger house served food to the travelers coming through on the trains. This was before the days of dining cars, and trains were stopped at Mendota and time taken out for eating and rest.

James Aiken became manager in 1863 and Frederick Haskell the clerk. It was said that under the management of Mr. Aiken the hotel became known as one of the best railroad hotels in the state.

Along with the other duties of "mine host," James Aiken also sold, of all things, farm seeds. He ran an ad in the local paper as follows: "Tobacco seed suitable for growing in this latitude left for distribution among farmers". The tobacco evidently didn't move well as nothing more has ever been mentioned about tobacco growing in this community so dedicated to the culture of corn.

The Passenger House had its well landscaped grounds, all neatly fenced in, and beautiful gardens. Martin Purcell was the gardener. Purcell had at one time been coachman for General Andrew Jackson. J. P. Brosius was the hotel barber. His barber chair was a gift from friends. It was plush covered and is said to have cost \$60.

Mr. Aiken sold out his interest in the Passenger House in 1872 to Charles Taylor. He was a son of Colonel Taylor of La Salle, a man prominent in Illinois history. Taylor's regime was eminent. Standing on one of the mantels of the hotel was a handsome gold anniversary clock, the gift, it is said, of Potter Palmer of Chicago.

The Passenger House of the 70's and 80's was the scene of many



parties and gatherings. It was elaborately furnished and saw many distinguished guests in its dining room and parlors.

There still exists in Mendota one of a pair of long mirrors framed in rosewood that hung in the parlor of this hotel. When the fire was discovered that razed this famous hotel, these mirrors were rescued from the flames.

\* \* \*

Built to replace this hotel was a new and fabulous new railroad station and depot hotel, which was said to have been the largest between Chicago and Omaha. The Depot Hotel had many rooms, a large dining room, and a lunch counter. The structure, with the wings that housed railroad baggage rooms and the like occupied a large part of an entire block.

When the new Union Depot Hotel was completed an elaborate opening banquet and ball was held on February 23, 1888. There were fancy dance programs, announcing quadrilles, waltzes, polkas, and military Scottische dances. The floor committee was comprised of James Smith, Ed. F. Higgins, E. P. Fassett, Samuel Fernberg Jr., and Charles T. Madden. It was a gala affair, and very much "society".

The advent of dining cars and increasing travel by automobiles spelled the eventful doom of the Depot Hotel. Under a succession of managers they tried to make it pay, but bit by bit it was closed off and about a dozen years ago razed to the ground except for the north wing which was modernized into a small but adequate railroad station only. The Depot Hotel, amidst the clanging and whistling of trains, had ceased to hold any glamor for the traveling public.

## BOASTED A STATION WAGON

Another hotel, considered one of the fine ones, was the Hoffman House. This was located on Thirteenth avenue, in the large brick structure known to many as the old seminary building. It was owned by Abel Hoffman and his son, James. The building, south of Prescott Brothers garage, is now owned by them and used as apartments.

The Hoffman House owned a pair of black horses that were hitched to a carriage with a canopy top. The carriage was sent down town to meet trains that arrived here, and to bring guests back to the hotel.

In the summer the small boys of the town used to wander up to the hotel to watch the fashionable ladies and gentlemen play croquet on the spacious hotel lawn. But this was long ago, in the early years of the 80's.

A big brick building stood on the corner of Main and Jefferson streets. On the first floor were stores; the second floor was known to all the town as the scene of much community activity, with a stage and a floor for roller skating. The third floor was the home of the Germania Turnverein for a time.

This big building was sold to Gabriel Pohl, a retired farmer, in 1886. He remodeled it into a three story hotel named Pohl's Hotel. He leased it to Frederick H. Haskell, Sr., who operated it until 1903. Mr. Haskell was well acquainted with the hotel business, having been a clerk at the Passenger House and later operating the St. James Hotel.

After Mr. Pohl finished remodeling his building there were 29 rooms, 13 of them inside rooms without direct outside light. Twelve of the rooms were "extra special" — they had coal stoves for heating. Mr. Haskell, the proprietor, had a young son named Dan and to this chap was given the duty of carrying up wood and coal to keep the fires burning brightly. However it was up to the guest to make and keep his own fire going.

## PLEASE DON'T BLOW THE GAS OUT

This hotel had all the modern conveniences available at that time. The rooms were lighted by gas. Many of the hotel guests were unacquainted with this new form of lighting. For this reason the hotel keeper had to constantly warn his guests that gas jets were to be turned off not blown out as they were accustomed to doing with the old oil lamps, but in spite of this many guests did not heed the warning and so it was the duty of the clerk to make the rounds of the hotel sniffing at each open door transom to see if gas were escaping as a result of carelessness or ignorance on the part of the guests.

Like so many hotels of the day there was a bar, this one located in the basement but later moved into the corner room on the first floor.

The hotel was run American plan. Two dollars a day for room and board.

Like most of the hotels in those turbulent days the Pohl had its share of excitement. At the time of the big Burlington railroad strike of 1888 thirty Pinkerton detectives moved in while they guarded the railroad property. Fortunately, however, there was no violence.

In 1903 Dr. English took over the hotel and renamed it The English Hotel. A few years later two brothers John and William Faber purchased the hostelry. It was then renamed Hotel Faber, and as such we still know it today.

Under the Fabers it was refurbished and made much larger. A fourth floor being added to the building and a necessary elevator was installed.

In the 30's the hotel was taken over by Mr. Charles Johns, who ran it until his death, after which his son, Dick Johns, continued its operation. It is still a large and flourishing hotel, and its Gold Room is the scene of many civic meetings.

\* \* \*

New modes of transportation over the years have brought changes in inn-keeping, but none so marked as the present trend towards accommodations for travelers on the highway, the motels. Mendota has five modern motels. They are Kakusha, Mac's, Puritan, Vic and Thelma's, and Shady Rest, all located on U. S. highways on the fringe of the city. Tourist homes preceded these, but motorists have shown a preference for the privacy and modern accommodations of the motels.

Yet Mendota's three existing hotels are usually full-up and seem destined to a hardy future for some time to come.





## THE FOUR HORSEMEN

ONE LOOK at the wreckage was sufficient proof of the terrific force of the explosion. The first warning had been a low report, faintly heard throughout the town, then a heavy jar, and the building and contents crumpled.

The cause of the explosion destroying Henning's brewery, killing seven, and injuring scores, will never be known. The supposition is that a stick of dynamite might have been dropped unnoticed into the coal at the mine and eventually fed into the furnace; the Henning Brothers were certain it could not have been the boilers since they were checked continually and were equipped with safety valves and water alarms that sounded a whistle when the water reached the low danger mark.

The explosion, on Friday, January 25, 1895, was perhaps the most all-encompassing tragedy in Mendota's first hundred years.

Men were imprisoned in the tons of brick, beams and broken machinery which were piled where the brew house had stood. Although the wind had blown up to gale proportions and the driving snow was blinding, the work of rescuing the wounded and finding the dead was begun immediately.

The wounded were located and given care; to find the dead was more difficult. Tons of material were removed, and by 7 p.m., the bodies of three men, David Gheer, David Wells, and John Kennedy were found near each other in what had been the engine room. Evidently they had been talking together: one still held a small wrench in his hand. All Friday night, Saturday and Sunday, even on

Monday morning the search continued until the last of the seven victims had been found.

The next *Mendota Bulletin* reported: "Day after day the mournful tones of funeral bells rang out over the city; never before had there been so heavy a call upon the sympathies of the citizens, nor such a manifestation of neighborly kindness and brotherly love.

"When the news of the terrible disaster carried from house to house, a shudder of horror passed through the community, but this at once gave place to a desire to be of assistance to those who suffered and mourned, and many are the deeds of kindness and words of cheer and consolation caught by the recording angel."

Mr. Henning had begun the brewery business in 1865 and had built up the concern until it was one of the most complete in the "West." The loss came when everything looked brightest.

He began immediate plans for rebuilding, after clearing away the heap of rubbish. A temporary structure was erected to carry on the business during the winter, but eventually he gave up his plans.

The greatest loss, however, was that of the lives of his valuable, faithful helpers. In 1889, funds had been collected for victims of the Johnstown flood, but the total amount had not been sent; the balance was immediately voted for aid to the victims of this local disaster.

\* \* \*

But this was neither the first nor the last of the catastrophies the young city was to endure; the Four Horsemen were to have their full ride. Earlier the city had twice faced extinction by fire (see "Some Hot Times in the Old Town"), later it was to be tried by storm, flood and plague.

No community seeks tragedy, yet it was in these moments that Mendota earned its right to be a city, that the often latent qualities of love, kindness, humility and community cooperation reached fulfillment.

## THE TORNADO HITS

Another Friday — July 17, 1903, was a day to be long remembered. It was neither too warm nor sultry; there was none of that ominous stillness which so often warns of approaching trouble.

Periodic but insignificant showers had dotted the afternoon; then, at about 5 p.m., a terrific rain drenched the city and the wind swept through with great fury, not as a cyclone comes, but more like a hurricane, blowing straight ahead with tremendous force.

Following the downpour was a lull; perhaps the worst was over? Then with appalling suddenness, it became black as night, there were additional torrents of rain, and a frightful roar was heard in the distance. In less time than it takes to tell, the destroyer bounded out of the southwest with overwhelming velocity, shot across the extreme west and north parts of the city, occasionally rising a little, striking the earth, or zigzagging slightly as its course was deflected by ground formation or open spaces. Then, in a twinkling of the eye, it was gone, leaving death, misery and ruin in its wake.

The brewery explosion cost more lives, but the tornado produced greater misery as the devastation was visited upon more people. In dollars and cents, an estimate of \$100,000 damage was quoted although undoubtedly the figure was not all-inclusive. Four local people were killed outright; 12 more were seriously injured. Many others received minor injuries or suffered from shock. Seventeen structures within the city limits were leveled; an additional three outside were also demolished. Those partially damaged numbered fifty.

Some had slight warning and fled to their cellars; others suspected nothing until they heard timbers crashing about their heads, or found themselves flying through space with the debris. Cellars undoubtedly saved many lives; had it struck in the night the loss would have been immeasurable. And had the tornado taken a course a half mile further south, the loss of life and property would have been too horrible to contemplate.

\* \* \*

People in the downtown area did not at first realize the full scope of the tornado. After it had passed, they ran out into the streets to pick up signs and gather the scattered merchandise, laughing together about the freaks of the wind.

But when they heard of the devastation to the north, they flocked there to find friends buried in the ruins of their homes, children crying and searching for mothers, and mothers for children; strong men weeping as they gazed upon the wreckage of that which had once been nearest and dearest to them. Chaos, confusion, desolation! Homes gone, and all so sudden, so complete! It was worse than any fire, for there was no possibility of saving anything. Even the livestock sensed the tragedy, for they ran about aimlessly, uttering pitiful cries.

And then again the rain came down. Everyone drenched, dazed, with nothing but the dripping rags which clung to their battered bodies; the anti-climax to a bewilderingly quick and thorough catastrophe.

The path of the storm was from the southwest to the northeast. It was first sighted in Bureau County, between Princeton and LaMoille, but did not reach its highest pitch of fury until it neared Mendota. Clarion and West Troy Grove felt its wrath in a lesser amount. It struck just west and north of Blackstone school, the storm center missing the building and moving on an easy path until it reached Henning's Ice House, at the edge of their pond. This building was ripped to kindling wood, leaving only a ludicrous iceberg.

The Stare Tile works was next hit, followed by a let-up, then a path of many fine trees. Houses fronting on the west side of the street east of the Illinois Central tracks went down like houses of cards; the North school was plundered so completely that it was difficult to tell where it had stood. Many beautiful trees on the Advent College campus were snapped; the campus was a sad sight, with windows smashed. Just north of the college was an old building which had housed a Negro church, but this was a ruin also.

Then, on. . . east into the country, through Meriden Township, then disappearing into the air somewhere near Paw Paw.

## WITNESSES TO THE STORM

A railroad engineer, trapped but fortunately uninjured at the throttle of his south-bound Illinois Central train, said the sky showed a large cloud as white as a snowball, preceded and followed by black clouds. The throttle was wide open and the wheels turning at a rapid rate, down grade at that, but the train was held to the spot by the terrific force of the wind.

Scarcely had the shock and consternation of the people passed when their deep compassion turned from works of immediate relief, such as finding temporary housing for the victims, to thoughts of permanent assistance.

A meeting was called by Mayor Browne, and a permanent relief committee appointed, headed by Senator Gardner, and including Messrs. Foster, Kieselbach, Crawford, Henning and Imus. Rev. Proehl and Father Heany also were of great help.

The great undertaking was begun, and the city pitched in to restore the homes, ration out food and clothing and the other necessities.

W. R. Foster, who now lives in Ottawa, recalls the tornado of 1903 vividly. "I was on the ground within a half hour after it cut the swath about two blocks wide across the north end of town. As I



recall it four people were killed, fifteen seriously injured and forty-five buildings destroyed or badly damaged.

"At the public meeting Saturday eve, July 15, \$1800 was subscribed in 20 minutes and I was made chairman of the relief committee. Robert N. Crawford had charge of raising the funds and I had charge of rebuilding and repairing.

"It took most of my time from July 18 to somewhat past the middle of November. Ultimately the finance committee raised \$10,200, workmen donated a certain number of days' work, dealers let us have supplies at cost and it was surprising how far we made the dollars go. I recall, too, that we were given furniture and stacks of outgrown clothes; and the last thing we did was to put groceries, potatoes, and cured meat enough in each house to last them till spring.

"The Milwaukee Railroad was going through that year. They bought a row of houses north of the Q and another row south of the Depot, and sold them to the committee for \$125 and up. A house mover in town gave us a very favorable rate. So we measured the houses that could be moved and the foundations that the tornado had left and ultimately outfitted everyone with a house as good as he had had. And the good people of the town found enough attic furniture to outfit the newly placed houses. All in all, I was thoroughly convinced that Mendota was the best little city on the map."

\* \* \*

Mendota was not spared during the influenza epidemic of 1918. Schools, churches, all gatherings in social groups were discontinued for a time. One family lost father and four children. And, as if the general suffering from the disease were not enough, the weather was unusually severe with heavy snow falls which crippled transportation for most of the winter.

\* \* \*

The most disastrous storm ever to strike this section of Illinois swooped down upon the peoples of LaSalle and Bureau Counties Wednesday night, June 27, 1945; a portion of country 23 miles long in Bureau County and another large area south of Triumph in LaSalle county was laid waste. The total damage was estimated at more than a million dollars. Beautiful farm homes, the pride of their owners, which had marked our highways, were torn assunder.

The city itself suffered most as the result of the swelling of the creek which usually angles lazily through the town. There was nothing lazy about it that night; in a matter of moments it had overflowed its

measly banks and a sheet of water and mud swept through the town, filling every cellar, every low place in the community and rising several feet above ground level itself.

In the Mendota Reporter basement was a carload of newsprint. Large rolls, each weighing 1150 pounds, were burst open and heaved from side to side. The big presses stood in water for two days before the basement could be sufficiently drained to permit repair work on the machinery. The State Theater, at the edge of the stream itself, filled quickly with muck and water; the high-muck mark is still visible both there and in the basement of the Elks, which until that time had housed the bowling alley. The underpass on Highway 51 south of the city filled so that traffic to the south was stopped for many days.

Throughout the area, the hurricane and cloudburst left little untouched. Telephone and telegraph lines were downed; the Burlington roadbed washed out so that trains were forced to detour for weeks. The Mendota gas plant was out of commission for three days. The Utility company had a force of men come in from surrounding areas to shut off the gas and meters. Then, the following Saturday, when they were again able to give service, the crew visited every customer, turning on the gas and checking every appliance to see that all was safe for operation.

And again Mendota was tested, and again Mendota rebuilt. Neighbors opened their homes and assisted the unfortunate to the hospitals for the necessary care. It took months to clear away the wreckage, but slowly and surely the city and the surrounding area emerged again from its tomb. The Farm Bureau organized a small army of the able bodied to clear away rural debris so that crops of oats and corn could be cultivated; as soon as the soil was dry enough, workers had the field in shape for cultivation.

The State Police and the militia worked hard, too, to protect the countryside from the greedy hands of the dastardly scavengers who seem always to follow in the wake of disaster.

\* \* \*

Through the years there have been other major storms, the most recent in December of 1951, but none have so desolated the city as those of 1903 and 1945.

One of these "minor" storms reduced the pride of Mendota, a four-story skyscraper at the corner of Washington and Illinois, of such height that it could be seen from the Lee County line, to a mere three-story structure. Today the building climbs only two stories, and is owned and occupied by Theodore Troupis.

Another wind storm removed the roof of the nearly completed "Henderson Seminary" near the corner of Washington and Thirteenth Avenue, at a loss of \$4,000 to the sponsoring Presbyterian church.

## HELP IN CHERRY MINE DISASTER

Perhaps remembering her own tragedies, Mendota has often lent a helping hand to neighboring cities and communities in times of peril.

At the time of the Cherry Mine Disaster in 1909, doctors, nurses and volunteer workers went down to assist the shocked and suffering little mining town. Much food and clothing was taken to them and several Mendota people stayed to help as long as necessary; they will never forget the misery of that bitter November 13th.

When word reached Mendota that the city of Chicago was burning, efforts were again made to assist the needy. The Mendota German Benevolent Society staged a grand Festival and Ball at Pool's Hall on Thursday, October 12, 1871. Tickets sold for a dollar, the proceeds to be donated for the relief of the sufferers of the great Fire.

\* \* \*

In the face of disaster, the final step must always be to turn back on the past and look to the future, and this Mendota has recognized.

Following the flood, for example, one local merchant advertised in his column the following week: "When your pulse returns to normal, we'll be seeing you, I hope", and he did. Mendota dug itself out of the mud and kept right on going, "come hail or high water."





## DRINK TO ME ONLY WITH THINE EYES

WHEN THE SURVEYORS for the original town of Mendota looked too freely upon the wine when it was red and thus got themselves gloriously inebriated, it looked as if the new town being laid out back there in 1853 would have a hell-for-leather future.

The surveyors, so the tale goes, were so drunk they could scarcely sight a true line through their transit, thus laying out the town on the bias, with errors so gross that some of the blocks are two feet wider at one end than they are at the other.

Be this true or false, they lost no time setting up the town's first saloon to help slake the thirst of the hardy pioneers who were busy building the railroads and constructing the new town. In 1854 the first saloon was established on Main street, near Washington, by a man named Chick.

Mr. Chick's saloon was a portable one, in an enclosed wagon on wheels. Thus it can be said that Mr. Chick "ran it." Whether he established it in a wagon so he could take liquor to the masses, or whether he was preparing himself for a quick exit in case of trouble, is not known.

Chick was not to be left unmolested in converting the new settlement to a life of alcohol and sin, however, for ministers soon came in to set up churches, and the town quickly acquired a tolerable balance between temptation and sobriety.

An early history declares that one of the first acts of the Village Board when the town was incorporated in 1855 was to outlaw liquor. The ordinance stipulated that no license for the sale of intoxicating, spiritous or mixed liquors was to be granted. Heavy penalties were named.

This righteous beginning apparently did not last for long, because by 1876 there were 18 saloons running full blast.

The dispensation of beer and strong drink was not the town's leading industry, but a considerable number of people worked pretty hard at it, both in front and behind the long mahogany bars. By 1904 the rate of growth of saloons had abated somewhat, but even so Dan Haskell, who was city treasurer at that time, reports that he issued 21 liquor-selling licenses.

Just how the third ward came to be known as the "bloody third" we leave to other historians to relate, but it is a curious fact that most of the saloons were huddled on the west side of town.

## ALABASTER CLEAN

The fourth ward has been nearly alabaster clean in the respect of saloons and taverns, for the span of 100 years.

Possibly most of the credit is due to the Illinois Central railroad, which in establishing the north east quarter of the city as an addition to the town, carried a restrictive covenant in all deeds, in perpetuity, requiring that the sale of spiritous liquors for any purpose other than for medicinal purposes, be forbidden.

Though the legal enforcement of this covenant may have been lost through the century, the fact remains that through custom and avid policing by residents of the ward, no saloon in the Illinois Central addition has survived for long. The Illinois Central addition starts on a line north of an extension of Washington street, northward and eastward to the city limits.

One lady barmaid quietly opened a tavern in this sacrosanct district after prohibition was repealed in 1933, but residents of the area soon drove her out of business.

At one time at least half of the town's churches were located east of the tracks. Time has changed this ratio and now they are located on the west side — where they can fight sin at short range.

\* \* \*

The young village was struggling with its morals and its conscience. A meeting in early April, 1861, in the Congregational church set

temperance machinery in motion. A committee of five was appointed to prepare resolutions. This committee consisted of Dr. E. P. Cook, Rev. Cramb, D. D. Kibby, H. S. Quinn, and Charles Bush. The chairman of the committee privately and secretly appointed a vigilance committee of ten whose duty it was to secure testimony to assist in making prosecutions for the suppression of the liquor traffic.

During the April election five trustees were elected on a "no license" or prohibition issue, and the slate of trustees in favor of licensing saloons was defeated. Accordingly Mendota went dry for the first time. An ordinance was passed prohibiting importation, manufacturing or sale of liquors. A fine of \$25 was provided, plus a further fine of \$25 for each 24 hours that said liquor remained in the corporate limits.

The ordinance also prohibited billiard tables and bowling alleys. They came under the heading of "nuisances."

Two years later the town went wet again, and the new liquor ordinance provided for the sale of spirits by license. The ordinance further provided that no liquor could be sold on Sunday, and saloons could not remain open later than 11 p.m.

Licenses were frequently revoked, probably on complaint of remaining open after hours.

\* \* \*

There was a "Temperance" Hall in Mendota in the late 1860's, and a Women's Suffrage organization was formed.

Apparently there was no law against serving intoxicating liquors to minors in this period, for in 1869 an editorial in the local newspaper lamented the fact that "many of our young boys do nothing but frequent saloons." The editorial went on to relate that the city contained a large segment of youth who were so far gone in dissipation that they were beyond all hope of redemption. "It makes one feel sad," said the editor, "to see young boys of 14 to 16 years old step up to the counter and drink their liquors."

Illicit distilling and fermenting was carried on, for the news of the period relates that a German named Singer, who lived on "Guiles Place northeast of the city," was arrested for manufacturing high wines and shipping them to Peoria, without license. He was taken to Chicago, fined \$2,000 and given three years in prison. That was a stiff sentence, particularly in terms of the value of a dollar in 1869 compared with today.

Colonel Bowen the banker was the prime mover and first president of a Red Ribbon club, organized in 1877. This was a temperance

movement, and to give the thirsting populace something better to do they opened up a reading room over Freund's store, with periodicals and everything. Col. Bowen said the reading room "will furnish a refined and homelike enjoyment which the saloon never can."

## WET AND DRY

Mendota voted itself dry again in 1867. On May 30 the paper said, "Prohibition goes into effect today." Licenses were to be granted for selling liquor for medicinal and sacramental purposes only. The first prosecution for violation, a drunk and disorderly charge, was quashed on a technical point. The ordinance was aimed at "tippling houses and other nuisances."

Despite the fact that the ordinance provided fines for violators, Cap Fischer was not dismayed and ran his saloon anyway. When arrested he paid his fines, and so did A. Erlenborn. On one occasion when Fischer was arrested, the jury "stayed out all night" and in the morning fixed a fine of \$50.

At the end of the year it turned out that the fines were producing less revenue than license fees would, and Mendota turned wet again. The following May liquor licenses were again granted and the ordinance repealed.

During the year of prohibition one celebrant, when arrested for making too much noise and being drunk, resisted the officer. The town marshal hit him on the head. Riot was imminent, but the marshal discreetly got out of the way.

Also during the year of the drouth there was a shooting at a beer garden south of the city limits. One Al Cunningham shot at one Pat Riley. No one hit.

\* \* \*

The city fathers in the early days made it easy for newcomers to set up their bars and launch themselves in the saloon business. In July, 1859, the ordinance on liquor licenses was amended so that a license could be granted and used immediately, instead of "having to lay over one week."

Thus, for \$25, one could immediately set up his barrel and spigot and open his doors to the thirsting portion of the population, and in 1860 eight such licenses were granted. Some of the names were



interesting and included McLaughlin and Simpson, Jacob Klucker, William Thompson, Solomon Fernberg, Gus Krueger, Olxe and Heck, Wilmroth and Erlenborn.

## HOME OF "MENDOTA BEER"

So important had become the slaking of thirst in the new frontier community that on June 29, 1865 — two months after the close of the Civil War — a special license was granted to Dietrich Volk to sell beer of his own manufacture at his own brewery, the fee being \$65. He previously ran a vinegar works. He was founder of the famous Mendota Brewery which was to extend the name of Mendota far and wide through signs which read "Mendota Beer." The brewery was located on the corner of Jefferson and Wisconsin, and was to continue a thriving business until 1895 when its 30-year history came to a sudden and inglorious end when the brewery blew up.

In 1865 the brewery was owned by Volk and Haas, and was closed for a time by the Collector of Internal Revenue for alleged violation of the revenue law.

Some time during the 80's the brewery was sold to Henning and Grube. The business continued to flourish in spite of complaints as to the odor and an order to build a reservoir. Finally an underground drain was run into the Mendota creek, which seemed to overcome most of the complaints. The tan-front building which was built later to house the brewery office still stands, on Jefferson street, now used as an apartment. Over the years a number of Mendotans dug out limestone slabs, once the foundation of the old brewery, and used them to adorn their gardens as flagstone slabs.

Many a dry Mendotan, on a blistering summer day, went into the back of the brewery office where there was always free cold beer, served in big copper steins.

Brewery malt, after it had served its purpose in brewing, was in demand by the local citizens as feed for their cows, and spent malt was hauled from the brewery to nearby farms where it was used to fatten cattle.

\* \* \*

Huge wooden casks of beer, loaded on a brewery wagon, were hauled to the depot to be shipped away. The wagon was drawn by four beautiful dapple gray horses, and, it seems, was forever getting stuck in the mud. As the drivers whipped up the horses to urge them to extricate the sodden wagons, it is said that women would shriek

to the drivers a warning: "Hit those horses just once more and we'll call the police!"

Beer from Henning's Brewery was hauled to Milwaukee by horse cart, a trip taking five days. Coals to Newcastle?

Some of the names of saloon-keepers who remained in business through those early years, as shown by city license records, include George Frey, George Fischer, Paul Knauer, A. Erlenborn, Lentz and Sonntag, E. D. Taylor, Nick Knauer, G. Westerman, and Theo Geise. Some of these were still in business as late as 1883. Lentz and Sonntag were still doing business as late as 1892 in the building adjoining Mel's grocery, when their place was damaged by fire.

## NEAR BEER HERE?

The new settlement was only six years old when one A. W. Brewer was brought to trial for selling beer without a license. Mr. Brewer claimed his elixir was near beer, not a liquor, therefore requiring no license. Some of the witnesses in his behalf testified that they "drank a hundred glasses a day," without ill effects.

Samples were sent away for analysis. Results of the test showed that two quarts of the lager produced about a half pint of genuine whiskey. It was reasoned that any witnesses who had downed 100 glasses a day would as a consequence be taking about six quarts of whiskey . . . enough surely to make any human slightly exhilarated.

As the judge got up to pronounce sentence, Brewer was struck with fright and fled from the courtroom. He was fined \$100 instead of being sentenced to jail.

\* \* \*

There was a bar in the old stone depot which burned down in the 80's. Old-timers recall that Pat Gorman was the genial bartender.

Basement locations were a favorite place for early saloons. Joe Ellingen had one underneath the present Goslin drug store, and Joe Weidner ran another under the building across the street. There was another under the present candy kitchen, and another basement emporium under Classen's grocery. Chris Ossman had a basement saloon where the Chuck Williar barbershop now is.

Mr. and Mrs. Fred Haskell ran a place in the Pohl hotel now the Hotel Faber building. Murphy and Crowley ran a saloon at Jefferson and Illinois where the shoe repair shop now is located.

In fact, the block on the south side of Jefferson street between Main and Illinois was labelled by the citizenry as "whiskey row."

It would be difficult to present a complete register of those who owned saloons in the early days, but the following were among those who dispensed steins of foaming suds. Henry Jacoby had a saloon just east of the present Montagnoli grocery. Anton Leven, one-time livery stable operator and one-time Mendota Opera House manager, also ran a saloon in the same spot.

George Sack ran a saloon at the Illinois Hotel for several years. At the Humboldt House, sometimes known as the Germania Hotel, north of the Virgil Shoe repair shop on Main Street, was another saloon run in connection with the hotel.

Old photographs of the Fischer Building, now the Candy Kitchen, show a big sign "Sampling Room." This was not, as it turned out, a place where out-of-town salesmen could show their samples, but rather the name of Fischer's saloon located in the basement. There was a grocery store upstairs. It apparently softened the impact at home if the tipsy husband had a sack of groceries under his arm.

John Faber and his brother, William Faber, opened the "Up to Date" saloon in the building on Jefferson street now occupied by the Talk of the Town restaurant. Later John Faber went into business for himself and opened a place just south of the present United Cigar Store.

## CHANGES IN OWNERSHIP

Many places went through a succession of owners. It would be almost impossible to trace the lineage of most present-day taverns, as they sometimes change hands frequently. An interesting succession is that of "Hub's" on Jefferson street. Years ago this was run by John Full and Andrew Full. John Landgraf bought from the Fulls, and he sold to Hubert J. Kaufman, who sold to William Rokey, who sold to Frank Secky who sold to Bailey and Haynes. A veritable "Abraham begat Isaac" sort of thing!

For many years Louis Waldorf had a very fine wholesale liquor store, located first where the present Faber barbershop is located on Illinois avenue, and later across the street at the site of the present Waldorf cafe. This was sometime before 1900. Earl Houk operated a saloon in a one-story brick building located near the feed yard, just south of the present Buick garage.

The Spanier saloon was located on Main street just south of Feik's coal office.

Some of the tavern owners who opened shortly after repeal of

prohibition in 1933 were Charles Schwarz who operated a place in the "Old Mill" on Sixth street, Bill Austin's Chatterbox, Steve Seno, and Harry Ossman's on Washington street. Bill Vogelsang opened his place in 1936 and Johnson's Tavern, also on Main street, has been in business since 1939, succeeding James Ellis' Smoke Shop.

Various nationally known beers were distributed from Mendota. The Wohler Brothers and John Kehm handled Schlitz from the brick building on Main street which now houses the Gillette Produce Company. Pabst was distributed by August Meisenbach who operated the big livery stable at Illinois and Monroe streets. He had an ice house just south of his establishment, where ice was stored for cooling the beer.

Bohemian Beer was distributed from a building on Fifth street later the headquarters of the L. C. Mercantile Company. The owners were Pohl and Yost. William Walter handled Budweiser from a building along the alley in the rear of what is now Wendt's drug store. Mr. Walter later took over the Lemps agency and moved across the alley to the building which was later the washboard factory and now Carroll Roofing.

At a later period Grosch and Weitzel handled Budweiser from the location in the Odd Fellows building.

## THE "FREE LUNCH" COUNTER

"Free lunch" was an institution. A person could buy a mug of beer for 5 cents (six mugs for 25c), walk over to the free lunch counter, and eat his fill. Phil Weber had roast beef, baked ham, sauerkraut, etc. He says they still made a profit.

Speaking of prices, at the turn of the century the bartender put the bottle before the customer, who poured his own. Two and a half ounces was 10 cents, three for 25 cents. Bulk whiskey, 100% proof, was \$1 for a full quart, or \$3 a gallon.

In those days it was rare for a woman to be seen in a saloon. If a woman walked in, in ten minutes the fact was known all over town. And she would be considered, in all probability, a loose woman.

Fair week or during the 4-day race events the saloons did a big business. There was hardly a vacant space at the bars.

There was great baseball rivalry in those days, and upon one occasion the La Salle Eagles refused to play Mendota a Sunday return game unless the saloons would open. This was during an era when saloons were closed on Sundays. The saloon proprietors got together



and asked Mayor Newton Imus if they could co-operate in order to make the game possible. He is reported to have replied "I can't tell you to open." Analyzing that statement, the committee decided while he didn't say yes neither did he say no. So they decided to make the rival ball game possible by opening their back doors.

So the Eagles were scheduled to play, and a special train pulled in from La Salle, loaded with rooters. Most of them rushed for the saloons immediately. Someone blocked off both alley entrances to Phil Weber's saloon so he opened the front door to let in the thirsting hordes. The saloons were ready with extra help, extra beer, and extra free lunch.

Some of the patrons never did get to the ball game, which was played at the fairgrounds. None of the saloon-keepers was arrested, not even Phil who had placed himself in quite a vulnerable position. Moreover, the mayor, hizzonner himself, had walked right past the establishment when it was running full blast.

In those days a saloon was a saloon. No attempt was made to soften the impact with fancy names such as tavern, club, cocktail lounge, or bar. It was simply a saloon, and that was that.

The opening of a new beer parlor was usually recorded in the newspapers with pomp and ceremony, such as attended the opening of the Reichardt and Wylie saloon in February, 1893. The announcement read that "Reichardt and Wylie will have a formal opening of their elegantly furnished new saloon next to the postoffice next Monday, February 20. Tony the harper has been engaged to furnish the music."

The old Reichardt saloon has had a succession of owners over the years. This place, at the corner of Main and Sixth street, now operated by Kathryn Biers, was run for a number of years by Robertson and Hoye.

## "TEN NIGHTS IN A BARROOM"

Throughout the register of saloon-keepers over the years were many names respected then and now in Mendota civic and social life. Most of the proprietors apparently conducted their places on an acceptable plane, for the pressure was great from reformers, Carrie Nations, church and women's groups. The Prohibition ticket carried a great deal of weight in state and national elections, and anti-saloon leagues were vigorously denouncing the evils of saloons and strong drink. Mendota had a "Loyal Temperance Legion".

Poems and plays played the same theme, as shown by the popu-

larity of "Ten Nights in a Bar-room," "East Lynn," and "The Drunkard." A community was either wet or dry, as determined by local option or local vote.

City records show that in May, 1870, a petition was brought to the board of aldermen asking that liquor licenses be increased to \$125 in order to keep down the number of liquor establishments. The motion lost by a vote of 3 to 8.

## "SALOONS MUST GO"

Undaunted, the same group of women started a petition in 1874, and got 400 signers, asking that license fees be upped to \$150. They had apparently done some effective spade-work in preparation, for the petition went through. All saloon keepers at this time had to file a bond before receiving a license, and the bond had to be voted on favorably by the board. In 1876 the liquor fee was raised to \$200.

Newton Imus, alderman, mayor, and county supervisor was an active temperance man.

In a certain famous Fourth of July parade the Wintrode Sisters, Alice and Frances, who both were ardent temperance campaigners, entered a temperance float that has become a legend. This was about 1895. The float was improvised on a hay rack. On it, girls dressed in white sang a song entitled "Saloons Must Go". Other children were chained to beer kegs, and a sign read "The Drunkard's Family". When the parade was over several of the children got a sound spanking at home for their pains. It seems that some of the fathers were none too pleased in being labeled drunkards, particularly those who could not be accurately described as teetotallers themselves.

## CARRIE NATION DID NOT AXE US

Carrie Nation, the famous hatchet-woman and scourge of saloons, paid Mendota a visit on August 5, of 1904. She was met at the depot by a large crowd of women and a host of curious small boys. Apparently none of the drinking crowd showed up to be tempted by reformation, for Carrie Nation in her speech from the depot cried out: "Well, if we can't save the old hogs, we can help the little pigs." Then she boarded the train for a chautauqua appearance in a neighboring town, not even deigning to smash so little as one Mendota bar or mirror.

A temperance crusade at one time occupied the attention of the ladies of the town, who went to pray at the doors of the saloons. At one place they were badly frightened when the proprietor rushed out crying "I'll get Tom." Tom was the town policeman. The ladies thought he said, "I'll get a gun!"

There were numerous local option elections, and the town went "wet" by about a 325 majority in most such tests of public sentiment. The barkeepers had an association, and on one occasion voluntarily changed the closing time from 11 p.m. to 10 p.m., which remained in effect for a number of years.

There was a spirited trial of a night policeman, one Daniel O'Kane, in 1877. The editor writing the account said "every time he had a saloon open up after hours it was to accommodate Alderman Coleman and his friends." The trial wound up with an oyster supper for all concerned at Meisenbach's.

## THE END — OR THE BEGINNING?

Came the early 1900's, then the first world war. And national prohibition.

It was a sad day in July, 1919, when the final day of legal liquor arrived on the Mendota scene . . . a sad day for inhabitants of the beer parlors. The final day of doom was on a Monday. Many had carted home suitcases full of the hard stuff, packed it in cellars and hide-away places, intent on retaining for a time at least a last vestige of their right to pursue the road to ruin if they saw fit. Many a patron showed up when the doors were opened, stayed all day sadly sipping the amber fluid and crying into his beer. Never was there such a concentration of forces in the bars of the city, not even on the day in 1933 that liquors were again legalized. But the crowds were orderly.

It is said that there was little gayety. It was as if the effects of booze had left them inert and lifeless. Mr. Booz when he had been so vigorously advertising his famous Booz Whiskey over the years little realized that from his name would be derived a word that would come into the American language as a synonym of evil drink. When the closing hour had come, there began an era that was not to end until 14 years later.

The Reporter interviewed the saloon-keepers as to their plans for the future. "MANY SALOONS WILL CONTINUE IN BUSINESS" headlined the Reporter. Among those who stated they would continue,

selling legal soft drinks, were Frank Reichardt, Phil Weber, James Pollock, John Landgraf, Hotel Faber Buffet, and John Faber. Kaufman Brothers had not decided. But Hub Kaufman was still in business at the same old stand when prohibition was repealed in 1933. His buffalo and deer heads had looked down on some lugubrious scenes during those 14 dry years, but Hub was ready for business with the same mahogany bar and oak-top tables that had been so long a part of the local scene.

Only two of the saloon proprietors decided to throw in the sponge and quit business. They were Perry Safeblade, and Dreimueller and Spitz. Nearly everybody thought that prohibition wouldn't last long. Most proprietors decided on a policy of wait and see.

## HARD DAYS AT "THE OFFICE"

Phil Weber, who had vowed to continue, soon found that there was no place for a near-beer parlor in a sahara created by law. His place was a morgue. In two weeks he closed down and sold his equipment — equipment and fixtures that had cost \$10,000 went for only \$400. This included his pride and joy, the French bevel mirror.

But Phil had run quite a place. He went in with his father, Phil Weber Sr. in the basement where the Williar barber shop is now located, in 1892. In 1903 they bought out Bill Hoerner where Austin's Chatterbox is now located. According to all reports it was a grand place, with a fancy tile floor, a long mahogany bar, and the French bevel back mirror — the most splendiferous thing of its kind in La Salle county.

Phil called it "the office." Thus if a customer, home late, were harried as to his whereabouts, he could in truth say he had been at "the office."

Upon one occasion Phil, Mike Elsesser, and Billy Florschuetz decided to take a train tour of the west. His friends and patrons sent them off in style. With burning flares lining a path across the street to the railroad station, plus a band proudly playing, they escorted Phil and his pals to the depot, carrying them on their shoulders, to see them on their way.

Small towns occasionally were visited by a man with a grind organ and a trained bear. On one occasion such a pair stopped in front of John Faber's saloon on Jefferson street. Patrons brought out foaming steins of beer and gave freely to organ grinder and bear. This



was apparently, to show their appreciation of good music. Bear and organ grinder both became tipsy, and there is no evidence that any Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals representative so much as laid a restraining hand.

\* \* \*

If this was the end of an era, it was the beginning of another. Nineteen-nineteen ushered in the era of bathtub gin, speakeasies, stills, rum-running, bootleggers, home brew, and "prescription whiskey for medicinal purposes only."

The speakeasies operated at first furtively, and later almost openly. Enforcement was left to state and federal officers. Locally most communities winked at violations, and Mendota was no exception. Since no liquor taxes were involved, one could always go down a dark alley, down into a dark, cobwebby basement, where, if known, you passed over a couple of dollars and received a pint of excruciatingly raw stuff that tasted like whiskey and no questions asked about its vintage.

## IN THE BACK STREETS

Places opened up in the strangest places — little places at the edge of town, dingy homes, and even out in the country.

One such opened for business in about 1926 at Culton Station, on the Illinois Central, south of Mendota. They let the word get around. Soon there were customers aplenty, for they not only dispensed beer and liquor, but in addition offered the charms of girls of easy virtue. They operated openly for a couple months, but were raided and arrested.

Sobriety has always been considered a virtue in Mendota, and drunkenness punished by arrest. In 1867 a newspaper account stated that any man or woman found drunk was immediately put in jail until sober, then tried for the offense. The line between exhilaration and drunkenness being often a thin one, and the police force being limited by the economic means at the city's disposal, actual arrest has usually been limited to disorderly conduct.

Many a peaceful vagrant has slept off his stupor in the city jail, as guests of the community, and ushered on his way the next morning without benefit of arrest or trial.

When, in 1933, prohibition was repealed, three classes of licenses for "taverns" were set up. Class A for retail liquor, Class B for

wholesale, each at \$100. Class C are club licenses, issued to clubs, lodges, and fraternal orders who sell only to members.

## NOT ALL WAS THE HARD STUFF

Our readers who may gain the impression from the foregoing that Mendotans were industriously hitting the bottle can take consolation in the fact that a thriving soft drink business was also done in the town. The first bottling company, known as the Mendota Health Company and operated by George Blanchard, was located on Washington street where the telephone office is now situated.

The Wohler bottling house started business in the home now occupied by Emma Millard. Later this business, operated by Fred and Ed Wohler, set up a business bottling pop and soft drinks and making ice cream in the building now housing the H. D. Hume Company office.

They drove a well for a water supply and the pipe is still there. Jim Andrews took over this business, and later Dan Pohl and Carl Yost. Dan Pohl moved the business to the Odd Fellows building, which was later purchased and operated by Al Hebel.

George Full had a bottling business on Main Street.

The Mendota of 1904 which had a population of about 3,500 and supported at least 21 saloons, might regard the Mendota of 1953 as being quite mellowed and soft. The city, with nearly 5,500 population, has eight taverns within its city limits plus three club licenses. There are five taverns on the outskirts of town which are under Mendota Township regulation.

## RESTRICTION ON LICENSES

The number of taverns within the city is now restricted to nine by city ordinance, plus a limit of three club licenses. After the limit of nine permits is reached, the city must increase another thousand in population before an additional license will be granted. This ordinance went into effect April 16, 1951. Before this there were no closed classes for liquor. A license now costs \$540, except for clubs which operate with same opening hours as taverns, for whom the license is \$425. There are two section two licenses at \$325, where the hours are 6 p.m. to 1 a.m. and on Sundays 2 p.m. to midnight. These may

purchase special one-day permits for sale of liquor throughout the day, on special occasions only, at \$10 per day, with a limit to 12 such permits a year.

\* \* \*

A fabulous saloon proprietor way back when was one "Fish Mike". His real name was Michael Leffelman, a member of the firm of Wilson, Whitmore, Leffelman and Heiman — which sounds like a firm of attorneys. They ran a saloon and sold groceries as well. Customers were always sure of taking home some solid food.

Leffelman was named "Fish Mike" because he sold so many fish to people who happened along the way.

The story is told of an exploit of Fish Mike's in respect to the huge old locomotive weather-vane which stood atop the tower on the old Mendota union depot. One day there was a group of workmen making repairs on the weather-vane. The subject of the height and size of the vane came up in a discussion at the saloon. Mike offered to bet \$5 that he could go up there and actually stand on top of the engine. They took up the bet. Undaunted, Fish Mike went over, crawled up the outside of the roof where the men were at work, mounted the engine and waved to his friends standing below on the street. He won the \$5.

Such were the good old days.





## IT'S AN OLD GERMAN CUSTOM

**C**OOK EIGHT OUNCES noodles until tender. Stew one pound prunes. Drain noodles and put into serving dish. Sprinkle with buttered, browned bread crumbs. Pour sweetened prunes on top. Serve hot as main dish on "Good Friday."

Yes, sir! It's an old German custom, of which several are still observed here by persons of German descent. (The prunes, incidentally, may be substituted for by prunes and apricots, just plain apricots, or cherry sauce. The dish is considered a fast delicacy.)

Lent provides another opportunity for the observance of a popular custom. On Fastnacht (Shrove Tuesday, the day before Ash Wednesday), ladies whose abilities include the special knack of yeast cookery shape dough into krapfen (raised doughnuts).

A generation ago, the sweets were formed into balls, after which the cook would pull the center of the ball out so that a pocket was formed in the doughnut as it cooked. Today the specialty is usually centered with a hole, and frosted.

The Lutheran Ladies Aid traditionally serves home-made krapfen at a Shrove Tuesday social each year, and the dessert is still served in a few homes.

Sausage parties climaxed butchering time on farms. On the evening of the day a farmer butchered, he prepared and put into casings a variety of sausages, then invited friends over to sample the freshly-made food and to make merry. This custom still persisted two decades ago.

Potatoes are a staple ingredient of much German cookery, and many local housewives treat their families with kartoffel Kloesse (potato dumplings) or hot potato salad. Other foods beside the potato salad which feature sour sauces are jellied goose meat, sour meats of various types, such as sauerbraten or sour herring), and sauerkraut with noodles. The gefillte (filled) noodle, a type of dumpling filled with a meat, bread and egg mixture, is delicious with brown butter.

Celery holders, now antique collectors' items, were at one time seen on all properly set tables, although the custom probably was not of German origin. Often made of glass, the holders were tall and slender, like the celery stalks they held. One resident (Mrs. Selina Hubler) recalls the time when she, as a little girl, decided to buy a celery holder as a gift for her mother.

Well drilled in the thrifty school of "don't-consider-it-unless-it-wears-well", the little girl chose a holder at a local store and then asked the clerk, "Do you think it will wear well?"

"Oh, yes," replied the amused woman. "Why, your mamma could hit you over the head with it and it wouldn't break."

## FROM PILLAR TO "POST"

Another turn-of-the-century custom which has persisted and is still utilized today is that of "posting" a man whose alcoholism has led to financial distress for his family.

The wife of an excessive drinker, by paying a dollar fee, may request the city to "post" her husband's name at the taverns. If, after that, the husband is served liquor at a tavern the wife may sue the proprietor, and only she may have the name removed from the list.

In 1876, one of the local papers reported that "eight persons are now posted as habitual drunkards, including one woman, "Aunt Ellen." Membership in this "exclusive club" now varies between 15 and 40 at any given time.

Unfortunately, however, the custom is somewhat abused, the dollar fee having decreased in value through the years. After a tearful scene with her husband, the woman may relent in a few weeks, have the name removed, only to go running back to the clerk's office a few days later to put her husband's name back on the list, the unrepentant spouse having just been out on another "bender." Thus the poster is kept constantly on the run.

Many of the German names so familiar to Mendota can be readily translated into English meanings. Centuries ago, some of them were

given to or taken by a man to indicate his occupation, i.e., Joerger means hunter; Dierwechter, doorkeeper; Koch, cook; Baumgartner, tree gardner; Gutknecht, good servant; Bauer, farmer; Mueller, miller, and Meyer, farmer.

Other German names, familiar to Mendotans, and their English translations, include:

Mehl, flour; Klein, small; Saueressig, sour vinegar; Stein, stone; Theurer, expensive; Hochstatter, person of some prestige; Funsinn, a combination of the words "five" and "sense"; Truckenbrod, dry bread; Preston, combination of "priest" and "town"; Katzwinkel, cat's square (a carpenter's measure); Engelbrecht, bright angel.

From other nationalities come other names. The Montagnoli family (originally from the land of the Alps) derives its name from "great mountain." Wild Bill Hickok's surname was originally spelled Hitchcock, of English origin. Pottinger is an English term for cook, and Moogk, Dutch for housefly.

\* \* \*

Another old German custom is the posting of funeral notices on the doors of business houses, stating name of the deceased and time and place of funeral services. These little black-bordered notices are always a curiosity to newcomers.





## “EAST SIDE, WEST SIDE ALL AROUND THE TOWN”

THE FIRE BELL tolls out its fierce warning of disaster. Somewhere in the early Mendota built mainly of wooden structures there is a conflagration.

It might be the Volk Vinegar works on the East Side . . . or it might be a carriage shop on the West Side. Men rush to their hose-carts. The East Side hose company races away to fight the flames. There is a clang of bells and sound of racing feet as the West Side hose company also flees toward the roaring, snapping flames. Both hose companies rush to reach the fire first, as the rivalry between the two brigades is at tense pitch. And both fight the flames until the last smoldering ember is out.

That was the Mendota of the early days.

Three sets of parallel railroad tracks divided the city. Each side set up its separate schools, and merchants on both sides of the tracks vied with one another for patronage. Each side of town, if legend is to be believed, fiercely fought the other.

Just how pronounced was this feuding? And were the rivalries as bitter as the unsupported tales that come down to us?

Your Centennial historians have attempted to seek out documentary evidence. We would indeed have to bury our head in the sands to pretend that there is not an “East Side, West Side, and North End”. Mendota is undeniably divided geographically by its three sets of railroad tracks. Each side has its schools, but no longer its rival fire

brigades. Each side has its splendid parks, fine residences, well-kept gardens, and paved streets.

Citizens of both sides unite in harmonious support of all worthwhile civic projects.

Was there truly a day when the town was racked with bloody dissension?

Every town, in its origin, seems to have some division line such as a railroad, river or creek which has presumably resulted in rival factions. Sometimes these divided parts are fanned by racial differences, or differences in economic status. Often there is a cleavage in the evaluation of social prestige with "those from across the tracks."

In consulting newspaper files and in interviews with old timers, it seems that many of these antagonisms were chiefly legend. True, there were minor clashes from time to time between groups and individuals of immigrants from Europe where rivalries flared up on account of differences in language and dress and customs.

## "THE BLOODY THIRD"

As evidence of this a part of the town still goes by the name of "the bloody third." These feuds date back to the decades of the sixties, seventies, and eighties.

It is related that many of these altercations took place on Sundays after church. The East Siders, presumably mainly Irish, preferred whiskey. The West Siders, presumably German, preferred beer. They would drink and argue, drink and argue, until frequently their differences would break out in open fighting. These "brawls," so the legend goes, usually took place on neutral ground at Sixth street and the tracks.

Free public schools were just beginning to be established. The railroad being a division line and a hazard for children to cross, two grade school districts were formed with separate school administrations. They remained separate until the beginning of the present century. But this did not bring about any apparent friction. There were no extreme athletic rivalries in those days.

In 1883 there appeared in the local paper this item: "Prominent businessmen of the East Side complain, and justly, too, that while they are bearing their burden of taxation for the support of the East Side school, they are obliged on account of the location of their business to contribute largely to the support of the West Side school, from which they do not directly receive any benefits."

At that time the East Side school suffered because it lacked funds from taxes to keep up with the West Side in building, equipment, and teaching personnel. For many years now the taxes have been equitably applied to the whole school system.

## ON NEUTRAL GROUND

From an interested bystander's point of view, Mendota displayed an extreme judicial decision in placing the high school in the neutral locality where it is now located, in the North End, with its beautiful campus.

Both sides have contributed progressive mayors and civic leaders.

In former years the taxes for improvements in streets and sewers were distributed to the sections that paid the most taxes. Now each property owner pays for the improvements that are voted by the majority of owners on his street. Pride in having equal streets and sanitary facilities does away with ward rivalries.

Each of the two independent schools formerly had its separate commencement exercises. Finally, in the growing harmony of the two sides of town, a common graduation ceremony was decided upon. It was to be held in the Opera House on the West Side. There were dire predictions that the event would end in a melee. The union graduation was held. The Valedictorians delivered their class orations and the Salutatorians saluted. Everything came off in grand style, without incident.

\* \* \*

All this is not to say that "boys will not be boys." There were rivalries among the fledglings. Some of them between boys on neighboring streets, and others between the boys of the two sides of town. The late 80's and early 90's were exciting times, for the boys grew up to defend themselves ably at fisticuffs. They believed in self expression, often seen in the form of a flying fist and a fast kick in the shins.

One fine day the boys of the two public schools challenged each other to a fight. One group gathered some stout clubs and took their dogs with them as they started off for school. The clubs were hidden and the dogs tied in vacant lots back of the school. This was to escape detection by the teachers.

That afternoon just before dismissal, one of the teachers looked out the window. What should she see but about 40 boys lined up across the street in back of a high wooden fence. The principal was

immediately summoned. Students were told they would have to remain after school. In the meantime, the police, school board members and some plain citizens were summoned.

The boys hiding behind and along the fence were met by their elders and sent packing to their homes. Not until then were the pupils dismissed. They slumped away, collecting their clubs and dogs as they went. No fight that day.

\* \* \*

But there was another time, and the fight came off before teachers or elders learned of the plot. The scene of the battle was from the Kohl residence on Peoria avenue (now known as Pennsylvania avenue) to the Gross corner at Jefferson street. There was a howling mass of fighting, shrieking boys. They were yelling, punching, and tossing each other in the dusty street.

Word passed through the riot that the town marshall had been summoned to quell the disturbance. By the time the police arrived the boys had quietly disappeared. All except one bloody lad, his head bowed and bleeding from a mass of cuts and scratches. No one ever knew — or at least told — the identity of those involved in the melee.

The young fry from the "bloody third" had protection all their own in a group of sturdy youngsters known as Coxie's Army. Boys coming from other wards thirsting for a fight got it when they met up with the Coxie band. Legend has it that they were fine fighters and usually victorious.

Lee Scott relates in his memoirs that there were opposing groups of boys here, with the railroad as the dividing line. If the "bloody third" ventured over on the west side of town there was sure to be a fight, he writes, adding that he himself was a regular participant. Many a day he went home with a "shiner," but he can't recall having been punished because of it. He did lose the end of a finger in a mower accident, but a boyhood chum literally "glued it back on."



# WING DING TONIGHT!

**S**TEP RIGHT UP, folks! See the largest rhinoceros in captivity—the only trained rhino in the world!”

Thousands of Mendotans have yielded to the cry of the Big Top barker through a century of Dan Rice, Ringling Brothers, Barnum's, and many lesser circus groups.

In 1858, in fact, the aforementioned rhinoceros in Dan Rice's Great Show attracted local citizens to the tune of \$1,200. This amused the circus performers, who thought Mendotans “green” for being so loose with their 25 and 50 cent coins. The audience, however, had the last laugh for the horned monster which so attracted them bogged down in the mud between here and Ottawa. The rhino and his car, together weighing 9,100 pounds, were finally rescued by an elephant, which hooked its trunk under the hind axle and pushed “with the power of a locomotive.” Handy fellow, that elephant—he also doubled as the show's tightrope performer.

Mendota was the birthplace of a lion in 1876 when Howes' Menagerie performed here. The baby cat was born in the morning and shown in the evening. The show must go on!

Shortly after the turn of the century, a group of circus performers caused a riot at the railroad station. With their thirst for spirits thoroughly quenched but their spirits not a bit dampened, the circus folks began to quarrel among themselves. When the arguments turned into fisticuffs, a gentleman from Kentucky named Ike Ramey, also waiting for a train, settled the whole affair by firing his pistol a few times. The depot door carried the proof of the ruckus—several

bullet holes. And the gentleman from Kentucky? He settled on a farm west of Earlville until his death several years ago.

Ringling Brothers circus played Mendota in July, 1917. The band, astride lively horses, led the morning parade along dusty dirt streets to thrill not only the small fry watching eagerly at the curbs but also their mamas, protected from the hot sun by parasols, and their perspiring papas as well. Barnum's circus performed for 13,000 in 1884!

Miss Wixom's half block, north of the Eastside school, was the scene of "Star Shows and Congress of Trained Wild Animals" in May, 1905. Mendotans viewed the events in three large tents.

Occasionally a circus still comes to town, parades the downtown area and then sets up business at the fair grounds, but never are these appearances as frequent as in years gone by (when three or four appeared each season, usually on the "Y") nor perhaps as fabulous.

Plays, too, were a favorite type of entertainment. Some popular standbys, such as "Uncle Tom's Cabin" and "Taming of the Shrew", were produced many times. A December, 1868, issue of the newspaper advertises Varney's Theatrical Group, which in three nights at Pool's hall enacted "10 Nights in a Bar-room," "Uncle Tom's Cabin," "The Stranger," and "Handy Andy." The Mendota Dramatic Company was active the same year. A decade earlier the same paper had lamented: "What has become of the Amateur Dramatic Association? Give us a little something to keep us awake this dull winter."

And in answer to the suggestion, the National Dramatic Troupe of Mendota was formed to enliven the "dull winter" of '58-'59 in Mendota and nearby towns.

From out of town came many other performers to entertain at Pool's hall. In 1869 there was Tom Thumb and his wife. ("No one should die without having seen Tom Thumb and wife, the smallest couple in the world.")

"Blind Tom," the brilliant though uneducated Negro pianist, played another time. A prestidigitator, many phrenologists, debators by the score, Swiss bell ringers, a velocipedienne, and health lecturers were received by Mendota audiences.

Dancing was undoubtedly among the highlights of the available entertainment. Dances were held almost weekly through the years, sometimes more often. A calico dress ball at the Music Hall (1859) drew young and old from a 50-mile radius. New calico dresses were sewed or purchased for the occasion, and husbands and fathers, assured beforehand that this simple type of dance would surely be economical, complained later that the calico came more dearly than any silk fabric.

However, the affair was repeated in 1871 at Pool's hall.

"Select dress balls," many masquerade balls, grand balls, leap year balls—all meant a gay time midst crowds of friends. Pool's hall, Erlenborn's hall, the old beer garden, Kuney's hall, the Illinois Central Freight House—all were scenes of festivity. And to help the folks who wanted to improve their dancing style, Professor George Williams opened a class in etiquette and dancing at Pool's hall in 1869.

The masquerade ball to end all masquerades was that held at Turner's hall in February of 1883—it featured a masquerade on roller skates!

As should be evident by now, Pool's hall in Pohl's hotel (and no one knows why the two were spelled differently), was one of the most popular gathering places of the last century. Citizens of the town frequently promoted renovations for the building—better ventilation, benches and later chairs, new stoves, fresh paint. And just as movie proprietors of today cope with such youthful vandalism as knife-gashed seats, so Pool's operators faced the problems of walls defaced by pencils and knives.

The sizable German portion of the population brought gaiety and fun to the town. One of their organizations, the Mendota Turnverein, organized in 1873, was social in purpose, and included physical culture among its activities. The society counted 50 members, and boasted a brass band of 12 musicians, directed by John Gross.

In 1883, the Turners, as they were called, planned the erection of an Opera House west of the Public Library, the site being selected because it was far enough from the business center to avoid the noises from the railroads but near enough to be convenient to all. The hall was completed in 1884 at a cost of \$8,000. The basement was for the exclusive use of the society and was equipped with such gymnastic equipment as turn poles and bars. It continued as a community center until 1914.

Washington hall, located on the second floor of the present Yohn and Kaiser stores, opened in 1871 with space for balls and a stage for performers. The social set, the "400" of Mendota, held private parties in Eckert's hall, the second story of today's A & P store, around 1900. The Passenger House, too, was the scene of lively dances prior to 1885.

## FLICKERING SHADOWS

Mendota's first movie house was the Palace, which was operated by Carl Schwarz in the location now occupied by the Ben Franklin

store. The first shows were not movies, but instead consisted of slides which were flashed on the screen containing the lyrics to currently popular songs. While an organist or pianist provided accompaniment, the audience thus joined in community singing, a form of entertainment which is still occasionally presented, but seldom participated in by the audience, in movie short subjects.

Competing with the Palace for the entertainment dollar was the German Opera House, which had a straight floor, and was used for such various purposes as shows, dances, and poultry shows.

In 1912, E. J. Degenhardt, who was operating a five-chair barber-shop on Jefferson street, suddenly became convinced that the "flickers" were more than a mere novelty, that they offered an intriguing challenge and a remunerative future.

Accordingly, he purchased the property cornering Jefferson Street and Illinois Avenue. He intended to build a theater occupying the whole of the property, but costs necessitated the construction of a smaller showhouse seating 400.

When Degenhardt's Princess opened, the population of Mendota had dropped to 3,700, but the wily operator took membership in the Pantages Vaudeville circuit, and was able to offer the community big stage shows, stock companies and big-time vaudeville, as well as the "flickers" themselves.

Young Ed Degenhardt, son of the operator, was the house's first projectionist. In those days a movie consisted of four reels of film, and lasted approximately an hour. Admission for adults was ten cents; children were admitted for five. As the film companies increased the length of their features, however, it became necessary to gradually increase prices.

## "TALKIES" HIT THE SILVER SCREEN

The first talking pictures to be presented were shown during Degenhardt's management, but were not successful. The sound was on recordings, instead of being carried on the film sound track as is done today, so synchronization was always difficult, often impossible.

Aside from the offering of commercial entertainment, however, the Princess, later known as the Strand, played another important community function. By its very nature, it was a natural for the presentation of high school class plays, graduation exercises, home talent shows, and served as a base for fund raising activities.

In 1924, Degenhardt sold the business to H. C. Jarnagin but



retained the building. It is currently leased to the Alger Theaters, a chain based in LaSalle, and operated under the name of The State.

The theater has since been enlarged and now contains 600 seats. In recent years, it has been effectively managed for the Alger chain by civic-minded Harold Larson, who has introduced a number of important innovations and who has been responsible for keeping the admission price one of the lowest in the state. It is not unusual, either, for the State to offer new films prior to their showing in LaSalle or even, on occasions, in Chicago.

And 1953 has brought an important change to the local theater; it is the year of "the third dimension" and equipment has been installed for the showing of the newly-developed 3-dimensional films. Another major project in the offing is the probable installation of wide-screen equipment for projection of Cinemascope, a film process in which the width of the screen image is approximately twice that of the height and, aided by a curved screen, suggests a third dimension.

Entertainment in the home began, late in the 1920s, to include an amazing new device called "radio", which, during the depression years, assumed considerable importance. By 1932, practically every home could boast the presence of a radio set—if little else.

Late in the 1940s, still another home entertainment medium came into general use. It contained elements borrowed from both the movies and radio, and was known as "television", "video" or "TV."

By the Centennial year, however, television had made only minor inroads into the community. Since television images, unlike radio, travel on a flat plane instead of conforming to the curvature of the earth, Mendota's geographic position, midway between the TV cities of Chicago and Rock Island, has made reception difficult. The few sets in town must be accompanied by high, cumbersome antenna, although the projected plans for the building of a Rockford station should alter the situation.

\* \* \*

The old beer garden, opened south of the city limits in the 1860's, was the scene of parties, dances, and brawls. The walnut trees in Kakusha park, planted by Christine Henning, were to have sheltered a beer garden, but the plan never materialized. In 1924 the Kakusha dance pavilion was built, and Sunday and Wednesday night dances with music by local and nearby bands were held until 1952 when the building was turned over to a manufacturing concern.

Puritan Park, built in 1925 by Everett Holliston and Charles Reeser at the west limits of the city, was a fabulous center for quite

a few years. It included a dance pavilion set in a grove, and featured big name bands. There was a coffee shop, and a big round swimming pool was a favorite summer diversion for young and old for about five seasons. The park also boasted a softball diamond which was lighted for night games, and was used by a softball league during the depression days of the early '30s. The dance hall burned down in 1933. The restaurant and bath house then became a tavern and night spot.

The "Y" and the corner of Washington street and Illinois avenue were the stamping grounds of noisy, entertaining medicine men. Medicine shows featured Negro banjo singers and "real live Injun", and proclaimed the cure-all virtues of Indian Sagwam and Painkiller and Kickapoo Indian War Medicine (the latter can still be purchased in drug stores).

Churches have always played a large part in providing entertainment. The dinners prepared by the "ladies of the church" 100 years ago were perhaps not so different from the ham and turkey feasts of today. Strawberry and peach festivals of the Civil War period were replaced by ice cream socials; now there are food sales and bazaars.

Father Murphy, who was working toward the building of a Catholic church in Mendota way back in the last century, planned a festival to be held in Leland to solicit funds for the new building. The festival, a gain for the prospective church, proved a loss to Father Murphy, whose hat was stolen at the gala affair and never returned.

Schools also planned benefits. Oyster suppers provided many a dollar for the seats of learning.

## AIN'T WE GOT FUN?

Seventy years ago walking marathons were popular. Johnny Geraghty was Mendota's professional walker. Johnny and his opponents trekked mile after tiresome mile on indoor sawdust covered floors. They walked until someone had to push them to make them move. Johnny's greatest achievement came in Chicago in 1876 when he established a record—10 miles in one hour, 43 minutes, 52 seconds.

In 1883, members of the Mendota Roller Skating club skimmed across the "special hardwood floors" which Pool's hall advertised. Around 1900, roller rinks, one across from what is now Dancey's, and cycle races down Washington street, attracted teenagers and adults. Roller marathons entertained crowds at Eckert's hall. In the 1940's, the sport had a brief revival at Kakusha park.

Excursions to nearby and faraway towns were well-liked by those who could afford them. Thirteen hundred Mendotans turned out for an 1867 Sunday school picnic in Earlville. Trips to Peoria, Chicago, the Philadelphia Centennial, Black Hills, and a Kansas buffalo hunt were also planned.

Fourth of July celebrations have usually lived up to their "grand and glorious" reputation. They still feature, as they did 100 years ago, bands, speeches, orations, readings, plays, and—of course—fireworks. Tragedy ended the 1865 celebration when Joseph Neff, deputy provost marshal, suffered a sunstroke while firing a salute and died of it a few days later.

The simple entertainments of the at-home variety were many and often spontaneous. So-called "pic-nics" often included 50 persons. Fried chicken never tasted better than it did outdoors under the shade of the box elder trees—nor does it today. Puritan park in the 1920's and Starved Rock from as far back as 1860 until now were favorite picnic spots. Quilting and butchering parties not only helped a fellow when he needed assistance but also provided opportunities for gay get-togethers of friends and neighbors. Sleighing parties on snowy town streets or among the drifts of country roads were as exhilarating (though more frequent) in the years before horseless carriages as they are now.

Square dances were family and friends affairs for young and old alike 100 years ago, dwindled in popularity about 15 years ago, and made a timid return within the last five years, this time in halls and schools.

Grandma, as a girl, played hostess to her teen-aged friends at taffy pulls or croquet games and chatted with them on hammock and swing. The first thing a family did to entertain a caller was to produce the family album, with comments; and the caller was really "in" if he was handed the stereopticon viewer.

## THE SHOW MUST GO ON

The early 1900's began a boom period ending in about 1930 for drama in the form of tent shows and winter circle stock. A dramatic troupe formed in spring to rehearse 7 or 8 shows, then in summer made the rounds of Mendota and other towns within the area producing their plays in tents. Audiences came to the tent pitched on the lot kitty corner from the Methodist church to see such three-act plays as "Bought and Paid For," "Girl of the Flying X," and "The Only

Road." Friday nights were often special occasions for the production of heavier drama rather than the usual comedy. Orchestra selections before (the "comeon") and after (the "getaway") the plays and specialty numbers in between acts were also features of the troupe. While troupe members played from four nights to a week in one town, they rehearsed the lines for another play.

Winter circle stock was so named because the drama troupe headquarters in one town to rehearse lines and performs in seven towns located in an approximate circle around the headquarters spot. Many Mendotans may remember the performance of the play, "The Rosary," in the Elks club building. David Reese, of Mendota, and Mr. and Mrs. Harry Owens, formerly of Arlington and now of Utica, played lead roles in the show. Mr. Reese, in addition to serving as a leading man, appeared as drummer, singer, or tap dancer in the Rotnour Co. and later with the Don Hopkins Players. The Rotnour Co. succeeded the Flora De Voss shows which appeared in the old Opera House before 1900.

Possibly the most famous of actors who have appeared in Mendota at the old Opera House were Otis Skinner and DeWolfe Hopper.

## MUSIC IN THE AIR

Of all the tin, wooden, and other wedding anniversaries reported by Mendota newspapers during the century, probably the most famous of all was "Uncle Johnny" Hoffman's in the 1880's at the Passenger House. It was said that 1,500 persons attended, and some Mendota residents of today can remember the time when they, as tots, accompanied Mama and Papa to the grand celebration.

Musically speaking, Mendota was sometimes up on its toes, often down at the heels. Prior to 1900, musical "conventions" were called frequently so that men and women could sing or learn to sing, and to arouse an interest in singing in the community. Small bands have formed and unformed locally through the years. Ed French's Military Band was one of the earliest. The Organ Factory band of the 1870's built a pagoda for outdoor concerts in the Passenger house park. The Mendota Brass band was forced to disband in 1873 when three of its small membership found the lure of a circus band in the South more attractive.

The Mendota Concert orchestra of the 1880's included such familiar names as Dr. Charles Cook, J. Hansen, H. Gulbrandsen, A.



Gulbrandsen, John Eckert, P. C. Weaver, and Frank Wintrobe. Benefit musicals and operettas were frequent.

Sporadic interest in art was demonstrated as long ago as the Fine Art Gallery of 1858 which displayed the work of a non-local painter, and as recently as the 1950 art show contributed to by local artists.

\* \* \*

The Elks auditorium in the 20's was the scene of numerous successful minstrel shows. John Robinson, negro janitor for the Mendota National Bank, was always provided a front row seat. His high-pitched and drawn out guffaws were sure to send the audience into gales of laughter. What John thought was funny was sure to "bring down the house."

\* \* \*

The depression of the early 30's spawned an active dramatic club of about 30 members. They arranged club rooms over the present sports shop, and conducted rehearsals there for several plays that were presented. The most famous of these was a mystery thriller, "The Yellow Shadow," presented at the Elks auditorium. It was a near-professional production with its own specially built scenery.

Reginald Butler, an artist, was the scenery painter, working with water paints. The day of the opening arrived, and the scenery was only partly painted. As final touches were being arranged for the opening curtain, Reg was on a stepladder still painting. As the last brushful was splashed on, the artist hastily withdrew to the wings and the curtain arose somewhat tardily.

The scenery depicted a sitting room, with rather *dark green* walls. As the play progressed and the paint began to dry, the green gradually lightened until in the final act it was a mellow *light green*. It was the first play in history in which there was progressive action on the part of the scenery as well as by the actors.



# THE POSTMAN ALWAYS RINGS TWICE

*"Neither rain nor sleet nor gloom of night  
stays these couriers in the swift completion  
of their appointed rounds."*

THESE IMMORTAL lines — penned many years ago — represent the official motto of the United States Post Office Department.

They were written as a tribute to your postman — the man who brings the mail to your home every week day rain or shine. For regardless of the weather, he knows that the mail must go through.

But when the first post office was established in Mendota on December 10, 1853, there was no such thing as a postman. In those days — and for 50 years afterwards — everyone had to go to the post office to get the mail.

Mendota's first post office was located in a small harness shop on the corner of Sixth street and Sixth avenue where the residence of Gust Walter now stands. Daniel D. Guiles, who operated a harness making and horse shoeing business in the building, received the appointment as first postmaster.

Patrons received their mail through a small window in the shop from the postmaster, who would then return to his bench and harness making.

During the early days the post office served as a gathering place for the townspeople, especially on cold winter days. Always on hand when the mail arrived, they spent their time visiting while the postmaster sorted the mail. The conversations usually ranged from "who was going to have a baby" to "how many hams the Jones' had in the smoke house."

Mail was one of the main sources of information from distant friend and relatives. Occasionally a letter edged in black was received, indicating a death notice, and folks hurried to console the bereaved friend. But the letters that attracted the most attention were those sealed with sealing wax. These contained either an important document or perhaps a love letter, so the recipients were carefully watched to note their reactions to the contents.

For the most part, however, folks freely exchanged the news they received. When the last letter had been delivered and read, most everyone had a fairly good idea as to what was going on in town.

In the early history of Mendota, however, mail was not received every day. It generally came by mail wagon and the letters were put in bags about the size of a common flour sack, which were made of leather and locked by the postmaster before leaving his office. The carriers were not allowed to open them.

Among the early mail routes in La Salle County was one running from Mendota to Ottawa by way of Triumph, Prairie Center and Freedom Center in the time of the Civil War and some 25 years later.

Prairie Center was the center of the route from which mail was taken to Mendota and exchanged for new mail on Tuesday and Friday. The mail was taken to Ottawa and new mail brought back on Wednesday and Saturday. Monday and Thursday were free days for the mail carriers.

The mail wagon used on this route was a curious affair. It had a bow top, and three seats, which could be removed so the wagon could be used as a spring wagon. Curtains could be put on and rolled up when weather permitted.

Occasionally passengers were carried from Prairie Center to Mendota. Each was charged 50 cents or 75 cents for a round trip. The mail carrier also did errands, charging 10 cents each.

Another contract for carrying mail from Mendota to Ottawa via Ophir was awarded to L. P. Dodge in 1866.

Mendota's first postmaster, Daniel D. Guiles, served two two-year terms after which he was succeeded by E. S. Mudgett, who also served two two-year terms.



On April 30, 1861 — 15 days after Ft. Sumter and the beginning of the bloody war between the states — Jacob Augustine was appointed postmaster and served a four-year term.

The fourth postmaster was David A. Cook who received his appointment on July 7, 1865. During his term of office the local post office was designated as a money order office. On October 1, 1866, the post office also discontinued the publication of unclaimed letter lists.

## MERCHANTS FEUD RESULTS IN BOYCOTT

By the fall of 1865 the postoffice was in the lower story of a two-story building on the south side of Washington street. Though it was moved in May, 1871, a few months before the fire, the building which had lately housed the postoffice was one of those destroyed in the blaze.

Pohl had offered to fit up his brick building at Main and Jefferson for a postoffice, rent-free, for a period of ten years. This offer was accepted. Near the end of the ten-year period the Washington street merchants banded together; they complained to Washington, D. C. that the existing location was unsuitable because "it was above a saloon and underneath a public hall. An investigator was sent.

Soon after the Washington street merchants' offer of the Dudgeon Building on Washington street at a rental of a dollar per year was accepted. It appears the merchants paid the rent themselves.

Thereupon the Main street merchants hired a boy to go to the postoffice to pick up the mail after each train so they wouldn't have to rent boxes. In addition, it is said, they put their mail directly on outgoing trains, stamped with stamps they had purchased elsewhere.

Eventually this boycott wore itself out. When there was discussion of moving the postoffice to the new Heiman building on Illinois avenue, there was open comment in the newspaper that this might be a fine way of settling the Main-Washington feud.

Postmaster Cook served for nine years until December 18, 1874, when he was succeeded by William H. Livers.

In 1882 the post office was moved to the Heiman Building on Illinois avenue, now occupied by Bob's Tavern. It was then the Heiman candy store, and some residents still remember the heart-shaped paraffin gum and cardboards of candies that Mr. Heiman sold the children while "Paw" was getting the mail in the back of the store where the post office was located.

On December 28, 1882, Dorsey C. Andress was appointed post-

master and served more than four years. During his term, the following item appeared in the Mendota Reporter:

"Postmaster Andress complains of the boys who congregate in front of the post office on Sundays before the time of mail delivery has arrived, and kick and rattle the door, which is a great annoyance to the employees in the office. He warns them that if they still congregate at the post office on Sunday, they must remain orderly or steps will be taken to keep them within bounds of good order and decency."

George A. Kellenberger succeeded Andress on February 14, 1887, and later, on January 19, 1891, was himself succeeded by Robert F. Shipley.

The next postmaster was Charles T. Madden who was appointed on January 15, 1895. During his term the post office was moved to the Fischer building on Main street, now occupied by Burkes news agency. He was succeeded by Elbridge G. McIntyre who was appointed March 3, 1899 and died after serving two years.

City mail delivery service was inaugurated in 1902. John Kite, Harry Wright and Dorris Bolster received the first appointments as city letter carriers on December 1st of that year, from Postmaster Albert W. McIntire, who had been appointed postmaster the previous year.

Then on February 16, 1903, rural delivery service was started with delivery being made by horse and buggy. The first rural carriers appointed were Frank Powell, Fred Brady, J. A. Powell, Harry Boslough, and Lawrence Prescott.

It was also during McIntyre's term that the post office was moved on May 1, 1904 to the Masonic Temple building on Washington street where the Wendt drug store is located.

Jacob G. Reul was appointed postmaster on March 23, 1906, and served for eight years. During his term, in July, 1913, parcel post delivery was added to Mendota's postal service.

The next postmaster was Emil J. Hess, who served from November 4, 1914, to May 30, 1923. It was during his term, in 1918, that a rural carrier's appointment was first awarded to a woman, Miss Prema Rhea.

## LOVE STORY

Miss Rhea drove her own team of horses, and took personal care of them after the completion of her route each day. In later years, when the automobile replaced the horse on the mail routes, snowbound

roads and mud were handicaps to the early autos and offered a new challenge to rural carriers. Miss Rhea met this challenge as capably as any other carrier, however, and always got through roads that seemed impassable.

In 1941, Miss Rhea was transferred to Grand Ridge and it was there that she met Ira Lightner, the man who was soon to become her husband. They met, curiously enough, at his mail box. He was a patron on her route. They were later married and are now living on a farm near Hinckley.

Robert Hallenberg became acting postmaster on July 16, 1923, but resigned after serving only three months. He was succeeded on October 15, 1923 by George E. Whitmore who served until June 30, 1935.

Postmaster Whitmore had previously spent 30 years in the postal service in Mendota, starting as special delivery messenger. It was during his term that the present federal building was constructed on Washington street. The corner stone was laid on December 30, 1931, and the post office moved into the new building on July 1, 1932.

It was also during Postmaster Whitmore's term, in March, 1928, that about 50 "Lindy" air mail letters were received by Mendota folks. These letters were sent to Springfield and Colonel Charles E. Lindbergh, who achieved fame for his New York to Paris flight, carried them to Chicago. From Chicago, the letters were sent to Mendota by train. Many of these letters are prized possessions of Mendota people today.

## MENDOTA'S ONLY POSTMISTRESS

July 1, 1935, was a gloomy day for the all-male post office force. It was on that day, for the first time in the history of Mendota, that a woman, Etta Lutz, began serving as postmaster. The gloom soon disappeared, however, and progress in the post office has continued since her appointment. Mrs. Lutz is the only woman postmaster of La Salle County's first class post offices.

For many years the postmaster was the sole employee in Mendota's postal service, but not today. The present staff at the post office includes 15 clerks and carriers, three rural carriers, one custodian, one charwoman, one mail messenger, and the postmaster.

Four star routes operate currently to and from Mendota, serving post offices in the surrounding community.

Present annual receipts of the Mendota post office exceed those of any post office in La Salle county.

Unlike former years, when all appointments to the postal service were political, the entire personnel of the post office, including the postmaster, is appointed by the Federal Civil Service Commission, and all are eligible for retirement benefits.

Only during the last 50 years have such services as Parcel Post Insurance, C.O.D., Special Handling, Air Mail, Postal Savings and U. S. Savings Bonds been available to the public at the post office.

Many interesting experiences in the postal service can be told by postmasters and employees. Postmaster Lutz enjoys telling of a call she received a few years ago from a woman patron. This call was in the form of a complaint.

"Would it be possible," the woman asked, "to have my mail delivered later in the morning? The mail carrier comes at ten minutes to nine and the rattling of the mail box awakens me."

Mrs. Lutz courteously advised her that such a change could not easily be accomplished, but suggested that perhaps by "padding" her mail box the arrival of her mail would not awaken her at such an early hour.

Not more than an hour later, a second woman called and requested that her mail be delivered earlier.

"When my mail comes," she said, "I have to sit down immediately and read my Chicago Tribune, and since my mail does not arrive until 11 o'clock, it interferes with my dinner preparations."

## THIS PATRON HAD TROUBLES

Best of all, Mrs. Lutz likes to remember the patron who came in with a complaint for not having received her government check. Among her other troubles, she had a few that sounded like the national debt.

"The well's gone dry," she said, "the roof blew off the barn, the chickens won't lay, the cow ate hedge apples and the milk ain't fit to drink, my old man got laid off his job, the dog's too old to run rabbits, the dry weather dried up the greens, hogs aren't big enough to butcher, tires no good on the old car, the neighbors won't give me a ride to town, spent all morning in the doctor's office, all my kids have left home, the mail carrier ain't brought no mail for a week, and I want my government check."



## BANKING IN MENDOTA

THERE NEVER HAS BEEN a hold-up or robbery of Mendota banks during the town's 100-year history, as far as is known, but there was excitement of another kind on one fine June day back in 1867.

When the First National Bank was in its original building at the northwest corner of Washington and Main, a hen escaped from Wormley's cart and struck a bee-line for the bank. The hen smashed through one of the large panes of window glass, plump into the faces of the astonished president, and demoralizing the cashier.

Mendota banking started in 1856 when the Mendota Bank was organized by Hastings, Phillips and Scott. The resident partner moved to Chicago; so the business gradually wound up and the bank was closed. The bank was reorganized in 1860 by Kelsey and Price and continued for eleven years, when Mr. Kelsey retired and J. M. Erlendson took his place and continued until the summer of 1877, when he closed up and entered another branch of trade.

This early bank was located at the corner of Sixth and Main Streets in 1866. In July of 1871 it moved to the corner of Main and Washington in the quarters then recently vacated by the First National Bank.

\* \* \*

Mr. Kelsey, president of the first bank, every night carried out a bag containing the bank money for safekeeping in the fireplace of his home. This is related by Anna Wilson Herrick, now aged 97, who adds that Mr. Kelsey had the only fireplace in town.

She also relates that about 1866 two fascinating young men

opened a bank. Their ways were so persuasive that a number of business men withdrew their deposits from the Kelsey and Price bank and deposited them with the new bankers. One morning they woke up to find bankers and money gone. Mrs. Herrick's father, who was in the firm of Conkey and Wilson, was one of those who thus lost his ready cash.

\* \* \*

The bank most remembered in those early days, however, was the First National Bank, which was organized February 13, 1865, just near the close of the Civil War. The principals were Col. E. A. Bowen and Edwin Littlefield. There were 26 stockholders and a capital stock of \$65,000. The first directors were Edwin A. Bowen, Harvey Childs, Llewellyn Marks, Edwin Littlefield, E. W. Fassett, Isaac H. Norris, and Philo Castle. Colonel Bowen was elected president; E. W. Fassett vice-president; and Fulton Gifford, cashier.

The bank was formally opened in June, 1865. The capital stock was increased to \$125,000 in 1870; then six years later decreased to \$100,000. The bank's business grew rapidly, and the charter was renewed in 1885.

During the first 20 years the net earnings were \$301,000, and deposits ranged from \$100,000 to \$412,000.

Though first located at Washington and Main, a new building was erected in 1871 a half-block farther west on Washington, the site of the present building of the First State Bank. Their new building was erected at a cost of \$13,000, including safe and vault.

The iron vault of the bank was surrounded by stone, and that by an enclosure of brick. The safe was supplied with a time lock which with the vault cost \$4,500. The windows were French plate  $\frac{3}{8}$ " thick, bought at a cost of \$65 per pane.

The bank carried as its slogan "the oldest bank in the county".

## PROMINENT BANKING FIGURES

Among prominent local banking figures who were employed at one time at this bank were R. N. Crawford, who was bookkeeper and later cashier; and Fred Haskell Jr. who was cashier both before and after interludes in banking in California and at Princeton, Illinois.

The bank operated for 67 years continuously until it voluntarily closed to preserve the assets of its depositors, on January 27, 1932.

During this long two-thirds of a century of operation the bank

had only four presidents. These were Col. E. A. Bowen, John R. Woods, of La Moille; E. P. Fassett; and later after illness forced Mr. Fassett to give up active management, Riley Woods, son of the bank's second president, took over until it closed.

These presidents were all vigorous civic leaders, active socially, colorful in many ways.

Colonel Edwin A. Bowen, born in Fitzwilliam, New Hampshire, came as a child with his parents to settle in Perkins Grove. After local schooling and 2½ years at Judson college he entered the mercantile business. He entered the Union Army in 1861 as a captain in the 52nd Illinois infantry and in a period of three years was promoted to the rank of colonel. He returned to Mendota in 1865 to become president of the First National Bank, organized that year. He served as treasurer of the first Mendota Library association and was the first city treasurer when the city government was organized in 1867.

John R. Woods, born in Passumpsic, Vermont, came west in 1863 to settle in La Moille. He was manager of a mercantile establishment there and became a partner in a privately owned La Moille bank. He became the first commuting bank president in La Salle or Bureau counties, when about 1898 he became president of the First National bank in Mendota. He drove the trip in a jaunty little Rambler roadster when weather permitted. He served as president until his death in 1918.

E. W. Fassett, one of the early directors, and his father, Elisha Fassett, held an interest in 12 banks in three counties, having been original stockholders and active in the establishment of all of them.

E. P. "Kit" Fassett had started as a clerk in the First National bank, which duties in those days included janitor work. He attended a Chicago business college and was employed in banking there. In addition he served as cashier of the Public Works department and also as cashier of the State grain office. He possessed a tall, erect, imposing figure. He was a fastidious dresser, and always appeared at the bank in the morning with a fresh flower in his button-hole.

\* \* \*

The Germania Bank was an interesting venture in private banking and had a long and colorful history starting in July, 1874, when Antøn and J. M. Erlenborn opened up at Main and Washington. This bank continued in the Erlenborn name until the death of the senior partner in August, 1876. J. M. Erlenborn then conducted it alone until late 1876, when John Goedtner who had entered the bank a couple of years before, became half partner.

In July following, on account of failing health, Mr. Erlenborn sold his interest to George H. Madden. Thus was launched a partner-

ship which continued in private banking as Madden and Goedtner Germania Bank for a span of 42 years. It was broken up in 1919 when state banking laws abolished private banks.

By 1894 the bank had outgrown its original quarters at Main and Washington, and a new building was erected a half block north on Main street.

John Goedtner was born in Germany and came to America and to Mendota in 1866, where he worked for his relatives as a clerk. He entered college in Chicago and worked for the Kirk Soap company there. He then returned to Mendota to become cashier in the Germania bank for his uncle, Anton Erlenborn.

Mr. Goedtner had many friends and brought a great deal of business to the bank. He was active in civic circles, and at one time was treasurer of La Salle county. After he ceased to be an active officer of the bank, following 1919, he became Mendota township supervisor, a position he held for many years.

The other partner, George H. Madden, was educated at Notre Dame. He was a bookkeeper for the Crane company in Chicago.

Later he returned to Mendota and worked in the foundry and machine shops of Donohue and Madden, until entering banking. For a time he was city treasurer.

Mr. Madden was interested in horses and racing, and was active in the management of the Mendota Union Fair and later the Mendota Fair and Agricultural Society.

He became superintendent of speed at the Illinois State fair just after the turn of the century and later became a member of the state board of agriculture, being named the president of this organization in 1907.

## CALLED ON TEDDY ROOSEVELT

He was a member of a committee representing the state board of agriculture which in June, 1902, called upon President Theodore Roosevelt at the White House to invite the president to attend the Illinois state fair.

Madden and Goedtner brought their sons-in-law into the bank to teach them the banking business. Dan C. Haskell, son-in-law of George Madden, went into the bank as bookkeeper in 1899, after having previously been employed as clerk in the Mendota postoffice. About 1910 Earl Lewis, son-in-law of John Goedtner, also joined the bank.



These two became officers in the reorganized bank which took on the name of the Farmers and Merchants State Bank when it became a stock company in 1919 under the new state banking laws.

Capital and surplus of the reorganized bank was \$55,000. Dan C. Haskell was president; John Goedtner vice-president; Earl Lewis, cashier; and Arthur Landgraf, assistant cashier.

As a state chartered bank it continued until January 13, 1932, when it closed during the depression to preserve the assets of stockholders. The bank closed two weeks before the other two local banks ceased operation.

\* \* \*

R. N. Crawford, who died in Mendota's Centennial year of 1953 after a lifetime as a prominent banker and civic worker, was one of the prime movers in the establishment of the Mendota National Bank which was organized in July, 1897, and which opened for business in September of that same year.

The capital stock was \$50,000, later increased to \$100,000. Mr. Crawford served as the bank's president from the time of its opening until its close in 1932. He is reputed to have been the youngest bank president in the national banking system. Louis Waldorf was vice-president and George D. Tower was the first cashier.

The new banking house was erected in 1913 at the corner of Washington and Illinois streets. The bank grew rapidly and by 1924 had accumulated a surplus of \$40,000 and the undivided profits at that time aggregated an additional \$20,000. Deposits were in excess of \$1,000,000. Buildings and fixtures were worth more than \$30,000.

In the mid-twenties Mr. Crawford was still president, Fred E. Cavell was vice-president, B. J. Feik was cashier, and E. A. Walker was assistant cashier. The board of directors was comprised of R. N. Crawford, Adam Kliyla, H. W. F. Henning, Fred R. Bailey, Henry Huss and D. C. Tower.

Mr. Crawford was only 20 years old when he went into the First National Bank in Mendota as bookkeeper, and after eleven years became president of the new bank at age 31. He was a tireless community worker, active in the Mendota Fair, the Presbyterian church, and was for many years the chairman of the Mendota Chapter of the Red Cross.

Following the closing of the banks in 1932, Mr. Crawford retired from banking, but remained active in his insurance business. He served one term as treasurer of La Salle county. All his life he was an active Republican, and knew intimately many of the men who made history in state politics.

E. A. Walker started with this bank in July, 1902, and thus last year completed fifty years of service with the Mendota National Bank and its successor bank. His name is Eddy A. Walker, not Edward Walker, as most people think. He recalls that the first year he worked for no pay, doing book work, making collections and learning the business. The second year he received a handsome increase, to \$20 a month.

\* \* \*

What was probably the darkest hour in the financial history of Mendota was January, 1932, when all three banks were closed. A moratorium of one week was called to establish a feeling of security, since the banks were solvent and a serious run might cause disaster. It was hoped this action would restore good judgment and confidence, after which the banks would resume as usual.

Conditions were changing rapidly. Even the largest banks in the nation were calling for help. But the local banks, even though solvent, were not allowed to reopen after the moratorium and they were placed in receivership.

Nearly a million dollars belonging to the citizens of the community were frozen in the closed banks. Business came to a virtual standstill. There was no place to cash a check, or to obtain credit. Merchants had to go out of town to obtain change with which to operate their businesses.

## THE NATIONAL BANK OF MENDOTA

WHEN IT BECAME APPARENT that there was no way to get the closed banks back into business, a group of forward-looking citizens led by B. Harry Reck, D. L. Barnett, Joseph L. Zolper, J. L. Schaller and others started a movement to organize a new bank.

It was difficult to sell stock because of the extremely tight financial situation prevailing. However, this most difficult task was accomplished in a short time. The National Bank of Mendota was organized and opened for business on April 9, 1932, using the banking quarters of the former Mendota National bank. Following were the officers: D. L. Barnett, president; C. Walter Jacob, cashier; F. J. Reichardt, assistant cashier; Joseph Zolper, vice-president.

The opening day deposits amounted to \$75,000. Paul Engelbrecht

opened the first savings account and C. A. Harbaugh was the first checking depositor.

With the new bank open for business, renewed confidence appeared and the financial life of the community began to return to a more normal basis. The new bank was able to extend credit to citizens, which enabled them to discharge their obligations to the closed banks. The result was that the depositors of the three closed institutions received a substantial portion of their frozen deposits in a short time.

A debt of gratitude is due the public spirited citizens who backed the new bank by the purchase of stock. Real estate as well as securities were at an all-time low and thus presented a more attractive investment than did stock in a bank where dividends would be long in coming.

The new bank was freely supported and growth was steady. This bank now stands as Mendota's oldest and largest, with nine million dollars in assets.

D. L. Barnett was the first executive head of the National Bank of Mendota from the time it opened until 1941, when he retired and was succeeded by J. L. Schaller, who holds the position of president at present. C. Walter Jacob has continued as cashier, and David Barnett is assistant cashier.

## FIRST STATE BANK

THE FIRST STATE BANK was organized in the spring of 1940 and opened for business July 6 with a capital stock of \$50,000, surplus of \$5,000, and reserves of \$5,000. The bank was established in the banking home occupied by the former First National bank. The quarters were modernized and have undergone other interior improvements since.

The directors and officers of the new bank were C. O. Harris, president; J. P. Gallagher, vice-president; E. J. Welsch, cashier; A. A. Landgraf, assistant cashier, and directors Fred J. Herr, Fred J. Welsch, Harry Fahler, H. O. Stamberger, Fred P. Feik, Earl Truckenbrod, Clarence Hoffman, Frank Prescott, and Frank J. Schwarz.

The bank has shown a steady growth and in Mendota's Centennial year has assets of five million dollars.

Present officers are C. O. Harris, president; Harry Fahler and Frank G. Prescott, vice-presidents; R. W. Hensel, cashier; Donald Faber and Fred Swanson, assistant cashiers.





## BLESSINGS OF CIVILIZATION

IT IS HARD for one to believe that the Mendota of 75 years ago had neither gas, electricity, water or phones. We who have come to accept these conveniences as indispensable and as a matter of course can hardly visualize this city of 4,000 people getting along with dug wells, candles and lamps, outside plumbing, and, wonder of wonders, without the telephone. These modern necessities of life came along at different times, involved divergent interests and created and solved such special problems in this community that they will be treated under separate headings in the interests of clarity and cohesion. The water system, always city owned and operated, will come last because it really did, owing to a peculiar set of local happenings, wind up the parade as the utilities entered the life of the community. Gas, electricity and phones, in the order named, reached this town under private sponsorship and have always so remained.

### LAMPS TO BURNERS

Mendota was the fourth city served by the Illinois Northern Utilities Company (now a branch of Public Service company) to install a gas service. At a special meeting of the city council on September 9, 1874, Darlington Turnbolt of Lincoln, Illinois, presented a petition, with copy of ordinance attached for erection of a gas works and the laying of gas mains in the city. At the same time a similar petition was presented by F. W. Robinson on behalf of the Western

Excelsior Gas company of Chicago. Apparently Mr. Turnbolt was the winner, for the council at its meeting of September 9, 1874, granted to him and his associates a 10-year franchise for such purposes, with the stipulations that at least two miles of pipe must be laid in six months,  $1\frac{1}{4}$  miles to be in 1st and 2nd wards, with  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile in the 3rd and 4th. Aldermen Scott, Ruggles, Meisenbach, Imus and Andress comprised the committee to which the above propositions were referred.

Immediately after granting of charter the Mendota Gas Company was organized and proceeded to build the first gas plant at Ninth avenue and Fifth street, where coal gas was produced for the ensuing 25 years, supplementary water-gas and oil-gas units being installed later on.

Gas was turned on in the evening of January 1, 1875. Forty meters were in place, with 20 on order and 10,000 feet of gas in the gas holder, thus introducing an era of no little import in the history of Mendota. Inside of a month there were gas lights at the sixth and eighth street railroad crossings. In the spring 70 meters were in place, while gas street lights were installed during the summer of the same year.

There was, of course, a lamplighter.

## NATURAL GAS

On October 10, 1885, the Mendota Natural Gas company, Incorporated, was formed with 100 shares at \$100 per share. A franchise was given by the city. Under this ordinance they were required to lay pipes to any lamp post, also to any residence within thirty days provided: "that said grantee shall not be required to lay mains to any residence unless such residence be within a block which is consecutive with another block in which gas is used". On October 17 drilling was begun on the Guiles farm, the state geologist having indicated that gas would lie in the Trenton Limestone. This venture never developed to the point where gas was had in quality or quantity to warrant distribution.

The Mendota Gas company served the city under an exclusive franchise until 1895, when the newly formed Mendota Light and Heat company built its competing plant at the "Y" and laid mains to all parts of the city. Thereafter the two companies were in most bitter competition. Mendota was one of a very few cities in the state to have more than one gas company.

Maximum rates were established by charter at this time at \$1.50

per 1000 cubic feet for illumination and \$1.25 per 1000 for heating. But the competing companies engaged in a rate war, during which, for example, they extended mains to any part of the city and placed the gas service in the home at no charge to the customer. As a result of this friction, with free service and low rates, the newer company failed after about ten years operation, leaving the field to the Mendota Gas company, which continued to serve the community until 1912, when all gas and electric facilities in the city were taken over by Illinois Northern Utilities company.

## POSITIVELY, MR. EDISON

Mendota was the first city in the state to have electric lights, largely as the result of the genius and energy of Lewis R. Curtis, of the hardware business of Curtis & Rude. The city council, in 1883, gave a 15-year franchise to Mr. Curtis, Max A. F. Haass, David Rude and Frank P. Snyder to install and erect an electric light works, the privilege so granted to extend to the corporation, Mendota Electric Light company, if organized. The company was in fact speedily organized, through local stock subscriptions. The precise sequence of events initiating this marvel into Mendota can best be told by quoting the man who was there, Ye Editor, through extracts From The Mendota Bulletin.

*Aug. 24, 1883*

Western Edison Light Company  
August 22, 1883

Mr. L. R. Curtis

Mendota, Ill.

Dear Sir:-

Yours of the 21st at hand, and in reply will state we have the apparatus for the exhibition plant on hand here, all ready to be shipped at the proper time, and there will not be a moment of delay after Mr. Edison has sent on the estimates for the central station.

Mr. Edison understands how urgent the case is in Mendota, and is doing everything in his power to get the estimates through promptly.

There is a great deal of scientific work to be performed in this business and it takes some time to get through with it.

Yours truly,

Geo. H. Bliss

Gen'l Sup't

*Oct. 5, 1883*

An exhibition plant of the Edison Electric Co. has been on exhibition in Mendota this week under the management of Engineer E. T. Ames, and last night the dynamo was set in motion by a shaft from the Carpenter Organ Factory. The business houses of Curtis & Rude and Max Haass were connected with the works by electric cables, and were splendidly illuminated by a variety of electric lamps and burners. About 25 burners were in use, any one or all of which could be instantly lighted or extinguished by the turn of a key.

*Oct. 12, 1883*

The exhibition of the electric light closed last night after a continuance of one week. It is apparent to all that the light has gained popularity each succeeding evening of the exhibit. Last evening an interesting feature was illustrated by placing a lighted Edison lamp inside a paper basket filled with shavings, where it continued to burn uninterruptedly the entire evening without igniting the shavings, thus demonstrating its absolute safety as to danger from fire.

The incorporators of the Mendota Electric Light Company have every reason to congratulate themselves upon the success of the exhibit.

*Nov. 2, 1883*

The new electric light will probably be started on Saturday evening. The machine will arrive today and be put up in Strawn's sash and door factory at once. The following are the stores to be lighted: Stiefel & Co., 3 burners; Piergue, 1; Cheenly, 1; Spencer, 1; Gillen, 3; Walsh, 1; Alshuler, 2; Tiers, 1; Forbes & Lorriax, 2; Hummer & Duncan, 1; Forbes & Flick, 2; M. B. Mitchell's Cigar Store, 1; and 1 at the machine office. These, with the 16 now burning nightly, will give us 36 electric lights, and there is room for more.

Thus, modestly, comes a new era. Within a few years the plant was moved to the spot on Illinois Street now occupied by National Tea, later to a location near the Inderrieden plant. During the period 1910-1912 several financial transactions resulted in acquisition by Illinois Northern Utilities Company, the present owners, Public Service Company, division of Commonwealth Edison Co. As a sidelight on growth of the business, which is about at its half-way mark in this community, let it be known that in 1912 there were in Mendota 600 users of electricity and gas.

As late as 1890 the system was confined to the business area, where arc lights were in common use in the stores — a very noisy device and one in which the carbon rods required daily replacement.

The original plant, at the present National Tea location on Illinois



street, was built shortly after organization of the company. For the first three years the equipment was a Thompson-Houston system for arc lights, only. Then a Westinghouse 200-light direct current machine was installed. Alternating current generators, making possible the use of transformers and city-wide distribution, were installed in the early 90's. The first commercial customer was the Curtis & Rude Hardware Store and the first residential customer was the L. R. Curtis residence at 411 Eighth Street. Mr. Curtis, whose foresight and energy were largely responsible for Mendota's first electric light system, installed a private burglar alarm at his house, one which turned on all the lights in the house when any door or window was opened.

Rates for electricity were 75c per lamp per month and \$12 per month for commercial arc lights. Only dusk to midnight service was given prior to 1895.

## THE NAME CHANGES

The company changed its name to Mendota Light and Heat company in 1895 when it secured a new franchise for both electricity and gas service. The electric plant was then moved to the "Y" where a new gas plant was being built. At this time 24 hour service was inaugurated. Under the new franchise the company was allowed to charge 1c per hour for each incandescent light of 16 candlepower, or \$2.50 per month per lamp for unlimited use.

In 1911 the Mendota Light and Heat company, also the competing gas company, were taken over by Illinois Valley Gas and Electric company. Through various changes in name and transfers this unified operation has ever since continued to supply both gas and electricity, the firm being presently the Public Service Company, Division of Commonwealth Edison Company.

\* \* \*

There are at this time 2100 electric customers and 1200 gas customers served by the Mendota office, with a total of almost 23 miles of gas distribution mains which are just now in process of providing natural gas to Mendota sufficient for all purposes, including residential and commercial heat and power.

The Mendota office is under the capable management of Jack Keefe, now 35 years with the company and in his twentieth year as manager of the Mendota office.

## WELL, WELL!

The story of the city's attempts at an early water supply for fire protection and for drinking is told in the chapter on city government, titled "and for the People." Better known as the Artesian Well fiasco, this ludicrous if not tragic effort cost \$15,000 and had the entire city at fever pitch a number of years.

Something was accomplished, for inside of a month T. B. Blackstone offered to sell to the city for \$1 Lot 16 in Block 49, which was selected as the site for the water works, but if used, there is no record. The Blackstone lot is on the corner of the block south of Mendota Trouser company. Tests were run, however, later in the summer. A three foot vein was found at 37 feet, with gas lying underneath, while at 90 feet water was forced 60 feet up the tube.

The water works was still under extended discussion in the fall of the year, while in the winter the council voted to connect mains to the C B & Q water tank for extension to the schools of the city, for fire protection only. With nine hydrants, the cost of the work, apparently the first to be done on the city water system, was estimated at \$4,000. In the summer of 1884 bids were taken. On June 21 it was announced that the mains were laid. Tests showed that there was enough pressure to throw a stream a distance of 100 feet and to a height of 60 feet. The main was 1908 feet long from the tank on Sixth street to Molln's corner; 437 feet from the same tank to Heafy's corner on Sixth street; and 1243 feet from the Eighth street tank to N. C. Cummings corner. In the fall of 1884 the council moved to extend the mains south and west to Donohue & Madden's factory and to the organ factory, and in this project they seem to have been no proper guardians of the public coffers, for in December they increased the pay of the men laying the mains from 15c per hour to \$1.25 for an 8 hour day.

It was not, however, until 1889 that Mendota secured a proper water plant, with water suitable for any purpose other than fire protection. The new water works, located at the present site north of the Tower factory, was tested in January of that year and found to be highly satisfactory. An airlift pump was employed having a capacity of 150 gallons per minute out of the St. Peters sandstone, 415 feet down, bringing to the city water "perfectly pure for drinking and culinary purposes." The dug well was finally on its way to oblivion.

The new system was also eminently satisfactory for fire protection, as the standpipe pressure alone would force "a large stream from a

11¼ inch nozzle to the third story of the Pohl Block," while the pumps would send three perpendicular columns over 100 feet into the air. So, too, now passed the dreary editorial comment following disastrous fires, "There was no water to fight the blaze."

From these modest beginnings, the city owned and operated water plant now has two wells, with a capacity of 850 gallons per minute, a reservoir holding 700,000 gallons, 29 miles of water mains, with 142 hydrants and 1850 meter connections.

The older wells brought up water which, though generally satisfactory, had an over-abundance of iron, which clogged the mains and stained the porcelain of fixtures. The latest well, completed only last year, brings forth water which is free of iron, but which has half again the hardness of the old water. Thus it is that the housewife always loses — what she saves in scouring powder she must spend on soap or water softening. But these things, too, will be cured in good season and in the meantime we enjoy a bountiful supply of water which in most respects is excellent, thanks to the trials and tribulations and perseverance of those who have gone before.

## "HELLO" GIRLS

The early history of telephones in Mendota is obscure. Strangely enough, this innovation must have caused scarcely a ripple, if one may judge from the scarcity of comment in the press of that day and age. We learn that Dr. E. P. Cook had a phone between his home and his office next door as early as 1881; that the city council granted a telephone franchise in 1882 to the Central Telephone company, probably the direct ancestor of the Central Union company so prominent at a later date; that phones were installed shortly thereafter; but of the early virtues and vices of this world-shaking invention, or of the trials, tribulations, squawks and problems attending its birth in this community we learn but little.

The local press announces under date of August 5, 1882:

*The telephone men completed the line from LaSalle to Mendota last Saturday which now connects us with Ottawa, Peru, Princeton, Dover, Joliet & Streator. Last Thursday after the connection had been made with LaSalle, Circuit Clerk Taylor was called at Ottawa and a clear and distinct communication carried on. The men are in town now and telephones will be placed in position next week. Central office will be in Police Magistrate Lamberton's office.*

While on September 16, 1882:

*There is dissatisfaction against the telephone company rule in not allowing free use of its lines from this city to other points in the county. At present there are but 17 subscribers and benefit is slight if payment is demanded for transmission of messages to other points—The Reporter office has encouraged the company by having an instrument placed in its office, but it is an expensive luxury at present.*

Aside from these brief comments, the subject is hardly mentioned. Perhaps Doctor Cook had already skimmed the cream of novelty and glamor from the milk of invention.

In 1893 a franchise was granted to the Automatic Telephone Company, the activity of which is thought to have been slight, while in 1897 the City of Mendota granted a franchise to the Mendota & Sublette Telephone and Electric company to use the streets and alleys for a telephone system. They were to allow city officers to use the phone on city business free of charge, and granted to the city the right to install and maintain upon their poles a wire for fire alarm purposes. The rights under this franchise were exercised.

## PARTY LINE

A telephone system was built in Mendota and Sublette, which operated for several years. There was no switchboard at either end, all subscribers being on the one line, getting into contact with one another by signal rings. Likewise, every subscriber could, by merely lifting his receiver, listen in on all traffic in the system — an exceptionally chummy arrangement. In October, 1900, this company, which was a partnership affair, assigned its interests to Northern Illinois Telephone company, which through various developments is in direct line of descent with the present company. The owners of the old company at the turn of the century were Charles E. Cook, C. Henning, Anton H. Lauer, A. J. Lauer, Joseph Schwarz, T. W. Lauer, J. C. Stough, P. H. Maus, P. M. Maus, W. B. Garrett and Phillip Mueller.

Northern Illinois, upon purchase of the Mendota & Sublette company, leased from John & William Faber the "front and rear room with closet privilege on second floor" near United cigar store on Illinois avenue for the sum of \$12 per month.

One year earlier, the competing company, Central Union, had leased for exchange quarters the second floor of the Walter Building on Jefferson. It is not clear when Central Union first came to Mendota,



but it is said that prior to leasing the Walter premises, it had operated in Mendota through an exchange in Aurora.

In 1909 the Northern Illinois company moved to the second floor of Tony Bennauer's building on Jefferson street. A year or two later, after having acquired the competing Central Union business, Northern moved to the present premises on Washington street.

The nucleus of the telephone expansion was, of course, the city-wide company, with switchboard and facilities servicing their one community. Right away, however, these various towns and cities became eager to talk with each other. First, this necessitated cross-country lines. Second, it involved working arrangements and cross-billing systems between the individual companies.

The cross-country lines were really a problem, for aside from the cost and the technical difficulties, they met with generally active resistance from the abutting landowners along their pole line, who were somewhat fearful of all poles, wires and things electric which might make the cows go dry and make the hens quit laying; also quite naturally resentful of any newfangled contraption which might benefit the city folks but could be of no earthly advantage to them.

Our own Claude Radley, who started in the telephone business in 1900 and who ran the Mendota exchange for almost 45 years, tells us that they had lots of trouble around the turn of the century on the line between here and Earlville. There was one farm owner six miles out who violently refused to let them go down the road past his farm. Soon they had the line built up to him from each side. Then one Sunday when their objector was in church they ran the line down the road past his place, having it in operation on his return home, whereupon they read to him the State law making it a penitentiary offense to disturb the poles or lines of an operating telephone system. Thus was the matter concluded.

## SIT-DOWN STRIKE

Even closer at hand, the telephone men brought up a pole to put in place, only to find the owner of the abutting property down in the newly dug hole. He refused to get out. The original, no doubt, of the sit-down strike. A new hole was dug alongside and work proceeded. It was obviously impossible for a man to stand in two holes at one and the same time.

Mr. Radley also has a franchise granted to the Lee County Tele-

phone company for use of the roads and highways of LaSalle county by the LaSalle county board on March 10, 1899. This franchise includes a provision, not considered unique at the time, "that all supervisors and other county officials shall have the free use of all public telephones in this county belonging to this company for official business and the like free use of public telephones in all adjoining counties for official business."

With the advent of connecting lines between these small local companies, the paper work, billings, cross-tolls and the like became staggering. Moreover, hardly a one of these home outfits had enough financing or operating capital to keep pace with maintenance and replacements, to say nothing of the obsolescence caused by the rapid technological developments in the business. Consequently, these small companies no sooner took a few breaths of life and started looking around, so to speak, than they began to combine. This solved some problems, but created new ones. Almost every small company which sold out to the combine or holding company insisted upon free tolls for its then subscribers over the entire system of the larger company.

A keen view of this problem is set forth in a letter sent out in 1903 to the subscribers of the Northern Illinois Telephone company.

"A large percent of the time consumed on toll lines consists of unimportant business and will entail on no one any hardship to be asked to pay toll where such use of the lines is made outside of our territory. A business man can find more remunerative use for his time than by wasting from a half hour to an hour waiting his turn for a line, and will gladly pay the small charge which will give him the prompt service wanted."

Apparently the free-haul was getting them down. But those who shudder at the number and cost of their long distance calls in this day and age, will get a wry sort of relish out of the next paragraph:

"What we will give free after the first day of February, 1903—is the following including our own exchanges and those of adjacent companies with whom we have arranged:

Arlington	Helmar	Millbrook	Plattville	Serena
Baker	Henkel	Meriden	PawPaw	Triumph
Bristol	Hinckley	Mendota	Plano	Troy Grove
Compton	Lisbon	Nettle Creek	Sandwich	Van Orin
Danway	Little Rock	Na-au-say	Somonauk	W. Brooklyn
DeKalb	Leland	Newark	Sheridan	Waterman
Earlville	LaMoille	Norway	Sublette	Yorkville
Freedom	Lee	Oswego	Shabbona	
Freeland	Millington	Ohio	Sycamore	

Beyond this we will charge 10c to each other exchange in the adjoining county and 5c more for each additional county."

During the 90's there was a company operating in and between Mendota and Sublette, without access, it seems, to other communities. This is not too strange, however, for the condition during this period was chaotic. Right here in Mendota there were two separate telephone companies operating at the turn of the century — the Central Union Telephone company and the Northern Illinois Telephone company, one with a local exchange, the other with local subscribers, but with its exchange in Aurora. During this period it was necessary for an individual or business house wishing full Mendota coverage to have two phones and two phone books, as there were no cross-exchange facilities between the rival companies.

The old company in Mendota was the Central Union. The new one, Northern Illinois, started operating early in the year 1901 with 150 subscribers, and hopes of securing a total of 200. Mr. Wylie, who had for a number of years managed the old company, went over to Northern Illinois. The new equipment was said to have been the most modern, the company stipulating that each subscriber should have a modern phone with direct "metallic circuit" to the switch board, a great change from the party line "hello-boxes" which were being used by Central Union.

A pretty definite pattern was followed by the local communities in reaching toward the present nation-wide telephone system. Characteristic of this pattern is the tiny system still operated by Chester Wills.

## PRIVATE ENTERPRISE

The Wills Telephone Company is probably the most remarkable utility in America, we learned. It has just seven subscribers, including Mr. Wills and his son-in-law, Bob Fitch, who operates the Wills farm. It is a full-fledged operation, however, and Mr. Wills is not only president — he is also toll clerk and line maintenance man. In a sense he is also the public relations man, for he frequently has to contend with irate subscribers whose phones may not be working just right.

The telephone line has no switchboard, having an arrangement with the Mendota switchboard to handle all calls, on a contract basis. The Wills telephone line connects with the local telephone cable near Srul Koopersmith's junk yard.

All this is just a hobby with Mr. Wills, the same as some men like to fool with model railroads. The telephone line was founded by his father, Oscar Wills, in 1895, when he graduated from the University

of Illinois. He set up the rural phone company to accommodate himself and neighbors. It's been buzzing along ever since. At first they had the old kind of phones that had a big box and crank. Being progressive, they later put in the stand type of phones, and now have the French type that hang on a hook on the box.

Chester thinks he has a few of the original phones stored away in a barn loft somewhere.

The system operates with batteries and magnetoës, and is strong enough to overcome a lot of interference.

Maintaining the company's vast 2½ miles of double-wire lines is no easy job. Many's the stormy night Mr. Wills has walked the line to repair a snapped wire. The lines are stretched on two-by-fours, seven feet high, spiked to fence posts. The line runs from the Wills home east and past the sewage disposal plant to the fairgrounds road and back along the Illinois Central tracks into Mendota.

Mr. Wills' biggest problem in maintenance is when power lines that cross his system fall down during sleet storms. His system is pretty well protected by fuses, although once several phones burned out. Such dangerous situations he leaves strictly alone until the power companies remove their lines.

Once a dump truck overturned along the Illinois Central right-of-way, tumbling down his poles and breaking the wires. Chester fixed this right away.

Several years ago when the big Easter sleet storm created havoc with miles of phone lines in this area, the Wills Telephone system was the first line back in operation. It took only three days to restore service, says Mr. Wills proudly.

## THE MARCH OF PROGRESS

Having no big poles, Mr. Wills does not possess a pair of those spike climbers which most linemen use to shinny up poles. Mr. Wills related this shortcoming rather regretfully, and, we thought, wistfully.

During the war his little telephone line was officially classed as an essential industry, enabling him to purchase wire and repairs.

Just to test the efficiency of his phone line, we put through a call to Mr. Wills. We got the connection right away, and his voice came through just dandy.

Mr. Wills is not sure how long he can perpetuate this hobby of continuing the 58-year-old telephone system. There is talk of a dial



system for Mendota. Chester does not think he can cope with the complicated system of electronic relays and dial equipment. Thus the irresistible march of progress may in the end spell the doom of his enterprise.

But his seven subscribers, who pay regular phone rates, hope not.

\* \* \*

It was not until the period 1910-1912 when both Mendota Telephone companies were taken into the Bell system that the city had a unified telephone exchange. Since this time the local company, now by re-organization and change of name, General Telephone Company of Illinois, has pretty well kept pace with technological changes and is just now, under the management of John Drilling, breaking ground for a new telephone exchange building, with the dial system, located on Washington Street west of the library. Mendota exchange employs 35 people and handles 2700 installed phones of which 500 are rural; proving to the man who stood in the hole that the telephone can be of service to the farming community.



## SOME HOT TIMES IN THE OLD TOWN

**I**N 1871, while Chicago was roasting in the inferno that may or may not have been kicked off by Mrs. O'Leary's cow, Mendota itself was going to the blazes for the second consecutive year.

And this time, the citizens became a little concerned about the matter.

The first Great Fire had been a year earlier on a night in June. The conflagration, which may have been the work of an incendiary but most certainly not that of a cow, started in a feed store located where Charles Montagnoli's grocery store now stands. Before it was extinguished, virtually all of the south side of Washington street was destroyed, the flames whipping rough-shod through dry frame buildings until they reached the brick block wall of the Kreis and Marks building.

Merchants on the north side of the street threw wet carpets over their store fronts in an effort to prevent a leap of the flames across the street.

Until this time, there had been no organized fire department. When a fire broke out, all hands in the vicinity merely pitched in, forming a bucket brigade, the brawny men hurrying away from their homes, carrying a pail or some other receptacle.

This disaster, and others, however, had made the young city conscious of the need for adequate protection, and a few weeks later an ordinance was passed providing for a fire company. This was to be comprised of city officials plus a fire warden and an assistant, who

were to be aided by any citizens they might call upon when the fire broke out.

The new fire brigade purchased 18 Babcock fire extinguishers. Town authorities went to Chicago to witness a demonstration of a recently invented fire engine.

Later the city purchased a hand operated pump, which was set on a truck and drawn to the fire by the firemen. The pump was operated much the same as a handcar on a railroad track. A system of water mains was also laid; two deep wells were drilled, going down over 500 feet into the St. Peters sandstone where a splendid vein of water was found.

In 1871, a citizen's patrol of 40 members was organized, three watchmen to be detailed to each ward at night.

## THE SECOND BIG FIRE

The inadequacy of even these improvements, however, was to be proved in November of the same year, when another large and costly fire broke out in Dean's furniture store on Washington street. A can of varnish fell through a trapdoor in the second floor, breaking as it landed on a hot stove.

In a matter of seconds, the resulting flames were out of control.

In an hour, eight buildings, including Warner's boarding house, the old postoffice building, Hawthorne's wagon shop, Fulmer's flour and feed shop and others, had been consumed. An attempt at back-fire failed.

The newspaper editors ruefully wrote that 1000 pails of water were utilized in an ineffectual attempt to stop the conflagration. He said that this amount of water would have been ample to have saved several buildings had an engine been on the scene. Firemen were praised for their coolness, promptness and alacrity. "Their courage," the editor summarized, "shows that we have the material for organizing an efficient fire company. . . .as soon as we can get an engine to work with."

(One fire fighter had rushed to the hand operated pump, pumped water in his pail and rushed away, only to look down and discover his pail had no bottom.)

Yes, this fire galvanized the community into action and the city council voted \$1,000 for the purchase of a hand-operated fire engine and hose. They also approved the purchase of 100 buckets, seven or



eight axes, three or four ladders, hooks, ropes and all necessary conveniences for extinguishing fires.

They passed orders that all were to be marked "City of Mendota."

Action came promptly and less than a month after this last disaster, Mendota had a fire engine. The engine and 250 feet of hose were purchased in Peoria for \$575.

The engine threw a stream of water 181 feet high at a grand fireman's tournament held in Bloomington. The Burlington railroad, realizing the importance of ample fire protection in Mendota, transported the engine free of charge.

And from the ashes of this tragedy arose many of the store buildings constituting the Mendota of today.

Just about that time one of Mendota's principal industries, the Western Cottage Organ company, employing (for those times) a sizable number of men, had been threatening to leave if better protection was not afforded against the ravages of fire. Ottawa, the county seat, persuaded the company to move there, which it did in 1875, where the company prospered but ironically suffered a \$100,000 fire loss a few years later.

(The organ factory was located one block west of the present St. John's Lutheran church. Part of the factory still stands and has been converted into an apartment building.)

## FRIENDLY(?) RIVALS

For a brief period, Mendota supported two fire departments. The second company, known as the Chemical company, was founded in 1876, and utilized a chemical engine.

One horsecart was kept on the east side in a building near the present depot, the other in the city hall which was located just east of the present library. Both fire companies would answer the fire alarms and there was considerable rivalry to see which would arrive first. There is no evidence, however, of any bitterness in the rivalry.

The wheels of the horsecarts were six or more feet high and were drawn to the fires via manpower. Considerable hose could be conveyed to the fires in this manner, although it was doubtless a strenuous task.

In 1885, a horse-drawn outfit was purchased, James Mahar furnishing the team to haul the equipment to the fires. Fred Schmitt usually took his dray team and hauled the hook and ladder outfit. Naturally, both teams rushed to the fires as quickly as possible.

On February 22, 1912, Mahar's skating rink feed stable and his adjacent home burned to the ground. East Siders were given the scare of their lives when they were awakened by the fire alarm. Looking out they were greeted by a shower of good-sized sparks and even some small embers of burning wood. Many were certain their homes would all be burned and urged members of the household to hurry and dress.

Firemen, however, realized they could not save the large frame feed barn at the corner of Sixth avenue and Eighth street, and devoted their efforts to keeping the flames from spreading to residences across the street. Large hunks of burning wood were carried as far as five blocks, and the town kept an all night vigil.

Not the least of the losses in this fire was a fine black horse of racing stock which Mahar had named Mendota Jack and prized highly.

## NEW QUARTERS

Later on the city erected a building centrally located at the corner of Eighth avenue and Sixth street to house the council rooms and fire and police departments. A few years later an addition was erected for the city clerk's office and rooms upstairs for the driver of the fire team.

Frank Schmitt, Jr., first driver of the fire equipment, resided in the building for several years.

The team was also kept in the building. When the door of their stall was opened they stepped out, the harness was dropped, and away they went. No lost motion there!

Oldtimers recall with beaming nostalgia the two white horses which drew the fire wagon. The wagon was red and the brass harness shiny and resplendent. Every day the horses were exercised. Up and down Washington street they went at a lively clip, foretops flying and tails flowing. Horses came and horses went — but they were always white. It was, apparently, a tradition.

Spurred by periodic tragic losses, however, the city council was ever ready to furnish the firemen with the very latest in equipment and eventually a motorized truck was purchased. This truck pumped the water from the water mains and gave it additional force.

Walter Black was the first driver of the motorized fire truck. Others who have held the position through the years were Joel Klinefelter, Harry Boslough, B. Parsons, Delbert Dewhart and, for the past 10 years, William Elsesser.

Today, Mendota boasts a thorough fire alarm system with 34 boxes placed around town for the placing of fire alarms. The alarm is heard at the fire station, at the home of each fireman and also at the telephone office where a disc is put on an automatic contrivance setting off the fire whistle which blows the number, repeating three or four times with a slight pause between each.

\* \* \*

The surrounding territory is also given fire protection, our firemen responding to calls in a large area outside the city limits. There is a specially equipped truck used in answering rural calls, identified by six blasts on the fire whistle.

Not all of the department's work has been connected with extinguishing fires, however.

Not only is there the added responsibility of retrieving kittens from trees and little boys from bathrooms, but also the rescuing of horses from cisterns.

One winter day a team of horses belonging to August Katzwinkel actually dropped into a cistern at the Mahar feed stable. The driver of the team had stepped away from the wagon. Hearing a commotion, he hurried back only to find that the team had disappeared.

He found the horses splashing around in the water below. His first thought was to secure help and without thinking he rang the fire bell.

The firemen responded and it was but a short time before they had set up a tripod to which was attached a large pulley and strong rope. The harness was unbuckled, a noose dropped over the body of each horse, and they were brought to the surface with very little injury.

## OMNIPRESENT ENEMY

Despite precautions, however, fire has taken a heavy toll from Mendota.

On an icy December night in 1885, only a few months after the installation of a new 9-inch sewer and water main, Mendota's fabulous union depot was destroyed. The stone structure containing a spacious hotel and bar as well as waiting rooms, ticket and baggage rooms, had been considered the finest depot on the Burlington between Chicago and Galesburg, and had been the scene of numerous top social events. The hotel-depot might have been saved had there been someone available at the time to build up the pressure on the water main.

On October 23rd, 1897, the Presbyterian church was destroyed by

fire. It stood on the same lot as the present church edifice, was a frame building and faced east.

Still another historic church site was razed by fire in 1942 when the Baptist church, once the pride of the city, was burned. A modern church has since been erected to take its place but the loss had been more than physical.

At one time Mendota had a linseed oil mill located on the vacant lot just south of the Mendota Building Service office. H. S. Clark was the owner. The mill had seen many years of service and was impregnated with the oil, so that there was little chance of saving it when it caught fire.

In 1925 the H. D. Conkey Manufacturing company plant was located in the Meisenbach building at the corner of Illinois avenue and Monroe street. When fire struck here, a total loss was feared but courageous firemen finally brought it under control before damage was complete.

The city was not so fortunate, however, on a Saturday night in 1937, when F. R. Bailey's furniture store building, also occupied by the A&P Grocery store, was consumed by flame. The complete stocks of merchandise were destroyed.

The fire broke out at 11 p.m., and before long it was feared that it might spread to the Mendota Reporter building, just south of the furniture store. A call for aid was sent to Peru, and in less than 30 minutes Peru's new fire truck, previously untested in action, came thundering down Washington street. They joined our firemen and remained here until daybreak.

## THE OLD AND THE NEW

The earliest complete fire department roster which can be uncovered today is that of 1898. (Most likely folks weren't giving much thought to a Centennial history before that time because few records were kept.)

In the 1898 group were Henry Roth, secretary; Nicholas Frederick, Aug. Ziebarth, Jacob Reul, Nick Riegel, M. J. Elsesser, Frank Schmitt, Jr., John Faber, William Hensler, Casper Frey, John Schaller, Philip Haefner, John Full, George Geyer, Clarence Huck, Anton Leven, John Pohl, Ed Riegel, Frank J. Schwarz, Frank Schmitt, Sr., Aug. Kolanczik, Fred Henning, Fred Bilhorn, Louis Knauer, Fred J. Oester, John Yost, John Landgraf, Anton Kuelgen, and Theo. Etzbach.

The present membership includes William J. Elsesser, Alvin



Kuhrt, Delbert Dewhart, Otto Sibigroth, Carl Galloway, Donald Schmitt, John A. Goebel, George Yost, Ben P. Kratz, Carlos Parson, Robert Preston, T. L. Stremlau, Howard Foster, John W. Bott, Robert Politsch and Dale Theesfeld.

## OLD FIREMEN NEVER DIE

Old Firemen never die. Take Mike Elsesser, fire chief for a number of years. Touring the west with Phil Weber and Billy Florschuetz, he had just fallen asleep one night in his Prescott, Arizona, hotel room, when the fire whistle, similar in sound to Mendota's, suddenly shrieked its nocturnal fire warning.

Mike bounced out of bed and started to tear into his clothes before he realized he was some 2,000 miles from Mendota. Habit was strong; a motor reaction, psychologists call it.

And what about old Fire Horses?

When the motorized equipment was purchased, the fire team was sold to a farmer near here. Time passed, and it was assumed that the horses had adapted themselves to their new life.

Then one day the housewife clanged her huge new dinner bell. With the first stroke, the team, hitched to a wagon, started off. The farmer, luckily holding the reins, finally managed to stop the team after the fifth racing trip around his field.



## “IN SCHOOL DAYS”

*“Still sits the school house by the road,  
A ragged beggar, sunning . . .”*

**T**HE MENDOTA SCHOOL BELLS this year are ringing out a century. But like Ivory Soap their century is only 99 plus percent pure, for the first public school was not built until 1854 on a plot just east of the present Graves Public Library.

Mendota's first school was a simple 40 x 30 one-story frame structure. Its glamor was housed in one room, which also served as a sort of union church. A century has erased it from its site and from the minds of all, even our oldest residents.

Near the spot where its bell once marked the hours of childhood toil, a silent cannon now faces east — a monument to the great grandchildren of those who played and studied on this spot.

Still standing is the building that was Mendota's second school, erected east of the tracks, known today as “the Old Lewis and Clarke hospital,” although it has been an apartment for many years.

Still standing too at the fairgrounds is a little frame school building which was the former country school known as the Wixom school which stood southeast of Mendota. It has been restored and, with the old Blackstone bell in its tower, will be preserved so that future generations may know what the little one-room country school looked like. Plans called for painting it red and white in the “little red

schoolhouse" tradition. But public sentiment wouldn't have it so. They wanted it painted white, as it had always been. And so, white it is.

Previous to 1860 there were three school districts in Mendota. They were known as north, south, and west side districts. The schools were so crowded that there were four pupils to every seat, instead of two pupils per seat, it is said. A new and more adequate building was proposed, but the new building was wanted located on both sides of the tracks. For this purpose there was a consolidation into one district, but by 1866 it was seen that both factions could not be satisfied and the single district was divided into two, using the Illinois Central tracks as the dividing line. Each district held elections. The west division elected E. P. Cook, J. C. Corbus, and J. L. Watkins. The east division elected J. Edwards, S. M. Thayer, and Philo Castle.

The directors were concerned over this division, but called a meeting to choose sites and decide appropriations. The east side purchased block 23 from T. B. Blackstone at a low price for the purpose of erecting a \$27,000 school of three-stories. It comprised a main building and rear extensions for recitation. There were seven school rooms and three recitation rooms in the basement.

Blackstone school, the west side school, was another building that resulted from the split. It was named after Mr. Blackstone, who gave the site. The school was erected at a cost of \$30,000 and completed in 1869.

A list of schools recorded in the newspaper in 1870 indicated that in addition to the east side "Union" school there was Blackstone school with W. F. Bromfield as principal, but also "branch schools", one on the west side at Washington and Ninth avenue; the other on the east side near the English Lutheran church.

Not until 1910 was there again a consolidation of these districts, now known as district 289. Thereupon an election was called and a president and six board members were selected, comprised of Otto Kieselbach, president, with W. T. Holliston, J. J. Thomasson, Carl Proehl, George D. Feik, Ferdinand Henning, and M. J. Elsesser as board members. J. A. Lamberton was named clerk of the board.

At this time the two high schools were merged into one system, with classes meeting in the Blackstone school on the west side.

## REUNION OF BLACKSTONE PUPILS

The dismantling of old Blackstone school is still fresh in our community's mind. On a nostalgic day in June, 1950, the alumni



of old Blackstone retraced childhood steps, and exchanged childhood memories in the venerable old building. It was open house, and the time-worn classrooms echoed with voices and laughter gone from those rooms for so many years.

The passage of time had brought changes to old Blackstone. The third floor was abandoned because the roof leaked and the plastering was crumbling from the moisture. Many, many lively feet had worn deep hollows in the stairs. The windows and doors were loose and noisy, making the heating of the great rooms a real problem. Repairs and maintenance became such a burden that it seemed only good business to plan a new and modern edifice for the rapidly growing younger generation.

But until the fall of 1951 that old bell summoned its children to gather within those solid walls; to seek the coolness of its lofty halls after a strenuous playtime in the September sun; or to dry their sodden mittens on those massive radiators after a lively bout with the snow and wind of January.

Memories, yes, memories of Old Blackstone—there were many related that June Sunday in 1950, during Blackstone's Open House. Probably Mrs. Zolper was the senior registrant, and her delight knew no bounds as she greeted so many of her former pupils. Mrs. Zolper was Miss Maggie Kane to those early seekers after knowledge and the years have not dimmed their regard for her wise guidance. Another guest was Miss Lina Clark, whose father, Warren Clark, built the building in 1869. Mr. Clark's picture was there, pictures of early graduates, old commencement programs, some commendable report cards, and even some of the frilly dresses. One from 1880 was worn by Miss Sarah Peart, whose tiny shoes were also in excellent condition. A fan belonging to Miss Clara Goodwin dated 1890 was exhibited.

\* \* \*

Many ex-students fulfilled a life-long desire to pull the old bell rope. Dr. Edgar Cook and his brother, Allan, sang their sweetest for Mrs. Zolper, their teacher. Later, Attorney Allan Cook favored his audience again, this time assisted by Mrs. B. Harry Reck. Their rendition of "Oh, Italia, Italia Beloved," brought back memories of the old Friday afternoon assemblies.

It is impossible to mention all of the friends of Blackstone who labored long and hard to bring about this reunion. No one felt ready to go home when the benediction was pronounced by Rev. Kenneth Sollitt of the Baptist church. For the last time the old bell had called its children to an afternoon of REMEMBRANCE.

When the community had voted to build a "New Blackstone", Mr. Scribbens was employed to draft the plans. The general contract was given to T. S. Willis, with sub-contracts to Brady for plumbing, heating and ventilation, and the electric work to George Whitmore, a former Blackstone boy. The total cost of the project was \$234,696.

The building consists of six classrooms 24 x 36 and a kindergarten 25 x 43. One large "all purpose" room 48 x 64, serving as the lunch room, the assembly room and the gym. A well equipped kitchen joins this lunch room. In addition to these rooms there are also a large office, the nurse's room, two supply and storage spaces and wash rooms. A modern oil burning furnace heats the building. The ventilating system controls the flow of fresh air into the class rooms. Fluorescent lighting furnishes the required candlepower when the natural light is not sufficient. The kindergarten is gayly decorated in bright colors and has adequate storage space for equipment. In grades one and two, green chalk boards and cork bulletin boards cover two walls, while a third wall furnishes closet space for wraps. The four other grades have locker space in the corridors for their belongings.

School in the new building began in September of 1951. A public open house held Sunday, October 28, gave the local people an opportunity to see the completed building.

\* \* \*

Mendota was justly proud of "Old Blackstone", and at its completion, a detailed description of the building and grounds was published in "The Mendota Bulletin" of July 29, 1869. With the Masonic-conducted ceremonies the community felt that it had succeeded in establishing a magnificent edifice and had taken every means to care for its young people, physically, mentally and morally.

To quote, "The corner stone was laid July 4, 1868. Much credit is due the directors, Messrs. J. L. Watkins, P. Kreis and A. Dean, for the faithful manner in which they have fulfilled their duties. J. L. Watkins Esq. as President of the Board, has attended to the letting of contracts and the construction of the building, devoting a large portion of his time to the prosecution of the work. The people of the district are especially indebted to Mr. Watkins for the prompt, faithful and economical manner in which the work has been executed. The position of a school director is not a pleasant one, and when the responsibilities of building a school house are added to his other duties, the director who sees the work completed is entitled to all praise.

"The building is situated on Washington Street just west of Thirteenth avenue. The ground (two acres) on which it stands was given

by T. B. Blackstone, Esq. of Chicago. It is three stories in height, besides the basement, and surmounted by a handsome French roof. Crowning the whole structure is a large cupola. The distance from the ground to the top of the spire is 104 feet. Two ventilating towers and chimneys rise 12 feet above the roof. The basement, 12 feet in depth, houses four large furnaces connecting with pipes which carry the heat to every room in the building. Every room has its ventilator, conducting off the foul air. And each room in the building has chimney connections so that stoves can be used if desired.

"The first and second floors have eight school rooms which will seat 60 scholars each. The third story has two such rooms, so the total seating capacity is 600, and, if necessary this might be increased to 700. In addition to these school rooms, on the second floor is a room 40 x 8 to be used as a Library. The third story contains a large hall 40 x 60 which will seat at least 500 people. The entrance to this hall is through two double doors.

"Two blocks of marble are placed in the brick work fronting on Washington Street. On one of these is carved the word "Blackstone", in memory of that large-hearted and generous man who gave the ground, and on the other appears the inscription Public School — 1868.

\* \* \*

"There is to be an 800-pound bell placed in the cupola. The water closets, of which there are two, are large and commodious, and are constructed with a view to insure perfect ventilation.

"We are under obligations to J. L. Watkins, Esq. President of the Board, and to Messrs. Clark and Worman, contractor, for the above description."

School opened in the new building with Professor W. F. Bromfield as principal and as his assistant, Miss Shurtleff. Teachers in charge of rooms were Miss Lyman, Miss Guy, Miss Harris, Miss Henderson, Miss Gould, Miss Kennedy and a teacher of German, unnamed.

The enrollment at Blackstone had by 1886 increased to about 475 pupils, including a high school department with a three-year course including Latin and German. The first school terms were 9½ to 10 months. By vote the public chose a ten-month term. In 1891 music was added to the required course of study and a piano was rented on approval.

Because German was being spoken less and less in the homes, it was voted in 1900 to discontinue the instruction of German in the first and second grades. And in 1901 the sum of \$2,500 was voted to install a sanitary system in the school.

## THE OLD NORTH-END SCHOOL

A building contract was awarded in 1868 to Fisher and Cook for erection of a school house at Guiles avenue and 16th street. This one-room school was to accommodate pupils in the far north section of the city. The teachers were loyal but never overpaid. A school board secretary's report in 1902 recorded as follows: "North school teacher to receive \$30 per month, she to do the janitor work."

The tornado of July 17, 1903, wrecked the building and immediately thereafter the school board rented a room from the Advent college so that instruction could continue while Mr. Dudgeon was building a new school building on the old site.

As modern transportation made it easier for the pupils to attend Lincoln or Blackstone, the school was abandoned and was leased by the high school at \$175 for 50-years rental and the building was moved to the north of the present high school to be used for a farm mechanics class. John Mauch has built a new home at 1600 Guiles avenue where the familiar old "North End School" was located for so many years.

## EAST SIDE SCHOOL IS BUILT

When the split-up of school districts came in 1866 the new building was started but only the first floor was completed that year. Many changes and additions were made in the plans, and so it was October the following year when the new three-story brick building was completed by Contractors Simon Lee and George Cook. "An imposing appearance and decided ornament to the city" recounted the local newspaper.

High school as well as grade school was conducted in this building and separate commencements were held each spring. When special functions were held, lamps were borrowed from the old Free Will Baptist church, electric lights being a thing of the future.

In 1910, when the districts consolidated, the name of the school was changed from East Side school to Lincoln school, by official vote of the school board.

Monday morning, April 7, 1930, was the scene of history-making experience in Mendota. For the last time, the pupils of the old East Side school assembled. "This time, they took all their "gear" and, led by a rousing drummer and a flag-bearer, they marched from the old building around the south side of the campus and into the west entrance of the new Lincoln building. Their teachers accompanied



them as they found their various rooms and settled into the old routine in new surroundings. Visitors for this occasion were shown through the new school and all were impressed with the fine arrangement of the wonderful building.

There are 15 rooms besides the large auditorium or gymnasium which can seat more than 500 people. As nearly as possible, the structure is fire-proof. The first floor is occupied by the elementary grades and the second is devoted to departmental work. The south room on the first floor is the kindergarten with its own private entrance. An especial attraction in this sunny room is the built-in fish pond, a gift of D. C. Tower, who was then chairman of the board of education. One of the visitors on this memorable morning was Miss Alice Brown, a dearly loved teacher in the east side system.

Another affair in connection with the opening of the new school was the Kiwanis club luncheon when the members of the Board of Education, Mr. Lamberton, the secretary, and Mr. Scribbens, the architect, were guests. The club members congratulated them on the fine service they had performed in providing the community with this new school building.

Immediately after the luncheon the entire group journeyed to Lincoln school where Supt. M. E. Steele, also a Kiwanian, showed them the many fine features of the new building.

A short service was held in front of the school for the students. The new American flag was raised to the top of the pole for the first time as each observer repeated the pledge of allegiance to the flag. Following this solemn moment, the pupils quietly entered their school again and resumed their work.

\* \* \*

But not until the evening of May 9, 1930, was the new school officially dedicated. At that time Mr. Steele had planned for Francis G. Blair, state superintendent of schools, to be present to assist in an official dedication program. Early in the evening patrons and friends of the school began to gather to inspect the various rooms. A crowd had assembled in the auditorium for the evening's program.

Seated on the stage were: D. C. Tower, chairman of the Board, Francis G. Blair, state superintendent, of Springfield; W. R. Foster, county superintendent of LaSalle county, of Ottawa; M. E. Steele, superintendent of Mendota schools; J. A. Scribbens, architect, of Glencoe; George P. Nauman and the following members of the grade school board: C. D. Powell, S. C. Cash, Edward Welsch, Spencer Moss, Rudolph Schildberg and George Hessenberger. Mr. Tower acted as master of ceremonies and gave a brief resume of the work involved.

State Supt. Blair congratulated this community on their progressive attitude. He also paid tribute to Mr. Foster who, 24 years previously was the superintendent of this school system in the old building now being replaced by the new.

Mr. Foster added his word of commendation to the forward movement. He reminisced for a time, reminding his audience of the really fine quality of the old East Side school in its day, and of the pride the townspeople had felt when Blackstone was erected. "These old schools were the best in their time", he continued, "just as this school, today, is the best of its kind in northern Illinois."

The entire cost in preparing the school for use came to \$132,368.

## SCHOOL DAYS REMINISCENCES

Blackstone's old bell was hung, at no small effort, in the belfry of the country school which houses exhibits during the fair each fall at the fairgrounds. The visitor possibly could take a quick tug at the old bell rope if the urge becomes insistent.

Lincoln's old bell is another matter. Rumor has it that it is preserved in the cold air shaft of the present building waiting for "the judgment day of all good old bells," when it may again peal forth its summons to eager listeners.

The old minute books of Mendota schools are in a good state of preservation and can be perused with interest to find who was a board member when, or who was teacher when you were in the eighth grade.

Prof. Samuel M. Heslet served two periods as principal in the Mendota schools. He first came here in 1860 from Earlville, where he had been principal for four years. He first served as principal of the West side school, and when the schools were consolidated he was appointed city school superintendent. He enlisted and served in the Civil war in 1862, but was injured in battle and resumed his teaching here in 1863. When the school districts were divided in 1867 he resigned. He returned in 1880 and served as principal of the East side school for several years. He was described as being "firm but dignified" in the school-room.

Another early school head was Prof. William Jenkins who became principal of the East side school from 1867 until 1872. He went to Ottawa where he was city superintendent for two years, but returned to Mendota in 1875. He was active in the state teachers' association for many years.

Does some one wonder about those cornerstones which the masons fixed so securely back in the 1860's? There was no particular fanfare when the stone was taken from the old brick school on the east side. There was nothing in its depth to be opened and viewed by onlookers.

This old stone was re-set in the inside wall of the large assembly room, where its date marks the passage of time for Lincoln groups who gather for social affairs or basketball games. Within it are 1929 calendars of the various civic organizations. There are also coins and paper money both old and new, and samples of the work of students of the time.

The story about the old Blackstone cornerstone is different. The massive block marking the foundation at the northeast corner of the old building was as firmly set on April 24, 1951, as it had been when it was originally laid on July 4, 1868. Men worked with mallet and chisel to loosen it, while onlookers watched with baited interest to see what would be disclosed. At long last Supt. M. E. Steele, Principal Ernest Dunn, and Board President Wesley Yenerich succeeded in moving it from its niche.

And in its secret depths was . . . nothing! No newspaper, no list of names and dates; not even a hole in the rock. Chips were salvaged by the spectators, who disappointedly turned their faces homeward.

But the new Blackstone will not be a total blank if its friends wish to open it in the year Two Thousand and Something. It contains a graduation program from the first class to graduate from Blackstone high school in 1879, as well as copies of The Mendota Reporter telling of the beginnings of the new school in 1950 and the 1951 ceremony. There are pictures of the classes in session at this time and programs of the reunion — plus a picture of Mrs. Maggie Kane Zolper who had been a pupil in the old school and later a teacher there.

After due ceremonies the copper box was set in the new stone block with the date 1950 engraved upon it, and sealed by the masons in the wall of the main corridor near the south entrance.

Many, many teachers have had a part in the building of character in Mendota youth through the years. A complete list would be impossible. Some of the names that come to mind are W. R. Foster, Professor and Mrs. Wallace, Miss Eva Clark, Miss Myra Howes, Miss Eva Rice, Miss Alice Brown, Miss Rose Weidner, Miss Katherine McDonald, Mrs. Maggie Kane Zolper, Miss Caroline Barth, Miss Mabel Brown, Miss Gladys Lamberton, Miss Bertha Bauer, Miss Florence Andrews. Among those still in service are M. E. Steele, superintendent, Miss Minnie Vogler, Miss Lila Powell, and Miss Lucille Fritz, who

was hired as the first kindergarten teacher and who spent a half-day at Lincoln and a half-day at Blackstone beginning in 1930 and who now conducts kindergarten in the new Blackstone building.

Faithful interest and service was given to the Lincoln school by George Hessenberger who was custodian of Lincoln for many years, and secretary of the grade school board.

\* \* \*

For many years eighth grade commencement exercises were held in the local theatre because of the lack of an adequate size auditorium in either of the grade school buildings. The first and only mid-year graduation of eighth grades was in February, 1916.

In 1880 the Blackstone commencement was held in the Baptist church with music furnished by the cornet band. The editor wrote deploring the expenditure for gowns. He wrote that this was all right for students of seminaries who were rich people's children, but undemocratic for public school pupils where the poorest as well as the richest may complete their course and receive a diploma. He thought the expenditure for dress might be a deterrent to some in going through the full course.

Brief excerpts from Mendota newspapers of early days record interesting bits of history on Mendota schools:

January, 1864: "Monthly report of Mendota Grammar School for January:

Number of pupils	76
Average attendance	69
Average absence	6
Tardiness	3,481 minutes
Days of aggregate absence	133

"The teacher would respectfully call attention of parents to the items of tardiness and irregular attendance."

This was followed by a lengthy discourse on the virtues of said habits in character building, etc., and signed "Teacher."

February 25, 1870: Reports from all classes in all schools. W. F. Bromfield is principal of Blackstone School and R. W. McDowell of East Mendota public school. North school is taught by A. A. McIntyre, and South school by A. Strasburger.

June 4, 1870: C. Bidenmiller, German Teacher, has opened a summer school in the Lutheran German Church. 50 pupils.

June 8, 1871: Miss M. N. McKeen will open a Select School at the old West Side School House for the instruction of boys and girls in the common English branches. Eight weeks, \$2; four weeks, \$1.



August 29, 1872: West Side—A. J. Sawyer, Supt., Miss Green, Lyman, Guy, Clark and Branch. East Side—J. R. McGregor, Supt., Miss Purdy, Howes, Stevens, McIntire. North School — Mr. Wm. Beardsley. South School — Mr. P. Cook.

June 9, 1876: First graduation from city schools, East Side. Class: Fannie Foster, Adaline Freund, Lottie Hicks, Ella Johnson, Emma Hawkins, Nellie Crooker (absent), and Alice Brown, valedictorian.

October 21, 1876: 2,025 children under 21 in Mendota, according to last count. East, 1,075, and West, 950.

February 15, 1878: Assault and battery: Alice Brown, teacher in east side school tried before Squire Arnold for punishing Dobbie boy. All the legal talent of the city were engaged—Messrs. J. C. Crooker and W. Evans for the prosecution, and L. B. Crooker for the defense. Case was continued and on the following day Miss Brown entered plea of guilty. Her fine was \$10 and costs.

William "Jeff" Quantrell, of Quantrell's Raiders, famous Confederate guerrillas, once taught school in Mendota prior to the Civil war.

## PAROCHIAL SCHOOL ESTABLISHED

Father M. Haefy served as pastor of St. Mary's church from September, 1876 until April, 1888. During his pastorate St. Mary's school was built on the lot at the corner of Sixth avenue and Second street, one block north of the church. This school was conducted by the Sisters of Mercy of Ottawa.

Father James T. Heaney was pastor from September, 1897 until his death on April 14, 1917. During this time St. Mary's school was abandoned because of lack of pupils and funds. The building was later demolished.

The first Holy Cross parochial school was established in the late 1850's in a building located at what is now 1002 North Main street. It was taught by a schoolmaster — strict and somewhat harsh — as was the custom of that day. This was the school site until 1864, when the building was moved to the rear of the Holy Cross church which was dedicated that year. The Sisters of St. Francis of Joliet, Illinois, were placed in charge.

About 1870 or 1871 the building was moved to 1004 Jefferson street, the site of the present school. The old frame building is still in use as a residence on a lot located at the north end of Wisconsin avenue. Sometime between May, 1900, and October, 1911, Father H. Tholen's pastorate, The Sisters of St. Francis, of Milwaukee, assumed the teaching duties.

Father E. Jacobs was the pastor; in 1913 the present school build-

ing was built. At that time living quarters for the Sisters were provided in the school building. When the new school was opened in September, 1914, the Dominican Sisters of Springfield, Illinois, assumed the teaching responsibilities. This same teaching order is in charge today. There were two classrooms for the eight grades. By September, 1916, it was necessary to have an additional classroom; so the school hall was used for that purpose.

In May, 1931, Holy Cross and St. Mary's parishes were amalgamated with Father Leo J. Wissing as pastor. The Holy Cross rectory became the residence of the Sisters. This made possible larger classrooms, a larger chapel and a library room. Later there were extensive alterations and improvements to meet the requirements of space and light and safety for the children.

In 1936-1937 the enrollment was 112. The remodeling done in the years immediately following provided a music room and a more spacious library, in addition to the four large classrooms on two floors. As the enrollment increased it became necessary to use the music room as a classroom. This was used by the first grade beginning in 1946. The music department was transferred to the library. That year the enrollment was 178.

Plans to enlarge the school were carried out in 1950 and 1951. Four classrooms were added to bring the total number of classrooms to eight, seven of which are being used. In October, 1950, the Sisters occupied a new Convent, formerly the Frederick property, on Jefferson and Pennsylvania. In the school year of 1951-1952 242 pupils were enrolled in eight grades taught by six Sisters.

In September, 1952, seven teaching Sisters took charge. They are:

Sr. M. Ruth, O.P. Superior—8th grade

Sr. M. Zita, O.P.—6th and 7th grades

Sr. M. Hildagarde, O.P.—5th grade

Sr. M. Rene, O.P.—4th grade

Sr. M. Victorine, O.P.—3rd grade

Sr. M. Laurenti—2nd grade

Sr. M. Germaine—1st grade

Music teachers: Sr. M. Victorine and Sr. M. Rene.

The present enrollment is 235.

## COLLEGE OPENED IN 1857

In the spring of 1856 some of the prominent citizens of Mendota who desired to have an educational institution here made liberal offers

of land and money towards the erection of college buildings. This subject was brought before the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Northern Illinois. The synod accepted and in 1857 the trustees met and made plans for the erection of a building. The Mendota Female College, as it was called, was opened in May, 1857, using the Lutheran church until the new building was completed. The Lutheran church is now known as the Advent Christian church on Illinois avenue and has been remodeled many times.

The new college was built on the outskirts of the prairie town on the site where Mendota high school now stands. It was an imposing structure for its day and had three stories and a basement. The upper stories were used as dormitories and the first floor was used for school purposes. Each floor had four large rooms and a hall through the center. Each room was heated by a stove, since there was no central heating plant. The beautiful five-acre campus was covered with trees and a few cinder paths.

The ground was donated by P. Rust, and various Mendota citizens subscribed funds totalling about \$5,000. During the first year, 77 pupils were connected with the institution.

The moving force behind the college was the Rev. David Harbaugh. He had migrated west from Pennsylvania, schooled at Wittenberg, Ohio, where he was ordained in 1851. He served churches in various communities until coming to Mendota, where he served as head of the college for 13 years. He retired after 1890 to Colorado Springs. He married Margaret Augustine. They had twelve children, eight of whom were born in Mendota. Harbaugh's addition is doubtless named after this pioneer educator.

\* \* \*

The school had to depend on boarding pupils, and a monetary crash in the late 1850's affected the funds which kept it going, so that within a few years its enrollment was down to a dozen students and a teaching staff of only two teachers.

Their struggles continued, and when Rev. W. H. Wynn was elected president in 1865 the name had become Mendota College, with the word "female" dropped. It was decided to open admission to male pupils.

A catalog of Mendota College issued in 1869 shows Dr. J. M. Dodge as president, although Rev. Harbaugh remained as treasurer. Rev. J. B. Corbett was principal and the faculty consisted of nine. There were nine seniors, all females, and 64 students in the "ladies' department" and 89 in the "gentlemen's department" — a total enrollment of 162.

The catalog felt called upon to explain its co-educational nature by saying: "it is evident that the mixed school furnishes the natural and therefore the most successful method of training the young."

The building, said the catalog, was located on a beautiful eminence which commands a fine prospect of the surrounding country, with full view of the different trains of railroad cars as they approach from four different directions.

The former Henderson Seminary or "Wesleyan Seminary" on Thirteenth avenue in Mendota had also come into possession of this college by gift of the citizens of Mendota in 1868. Both buildings were included in the catalog listing. The Rev. R. C. Colmery, pastor of the Presbyterian church and one of the early leaders in the Seminary, was listed as one of the citizens committee who had raised the funds to donate the combined properties to the Evangelical Lutheran Synod.

By 1870 the school was discontinued when endowments were withdrawn. The school stood vacant until 1873 when it was purchased by the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Iowa.

## FOR SALE: ONE COLLEGE BUILDING

It was not easy property to dispose of, as colleges often were going begging for lack of support. Crooker and Hunter, Mendota real estate agents, advertised a rare bargain — the Mendota College with 27 rooms and five acres of ground planted in trees, plus Mr. Harbaugh's "fine residence" near the school.

The Iowa Synod of the church had found its Wartburg Seminary near Dubuque inadequate and they sought larger quarters. Pastors Ade of Mendota and Schieferdecker of Clarion brought the vacant Mendota school to the synod's attention. The investigating committee reported that the masonry of the four-story school was sound, but that it needed a new roof and flooring. The total cost not including repairs and improvements was \$2,500. An educational fund was acquired, but since it could not be transferred immediately a residence a block south of the college was accepted instead and this became the home of Wartburg College, formerly of Galena, Illinois. This house, now the home of Mrs. Hattie M. Spears, at 1600 Lincoln avenue, housed Wartburg College until it moved in 1885 to Waverly, Iowa.

The college building was operated as the Wartburg Seminary until 1889 when the institution was moved to Dubuque, Iowa, the present location of Wartburg Seminary.

The vacant college building was revived as an educational insti-



tution in 1893 when a group of 70 people, many of them prominent citizens of Mendota, contributed funds to purchase and refit the building for educational, publication, and camp meeting purposes for the Advent Christian church.

The college set up a theological school, as well as a musical department and a four-year preparatory course equivalent to high school, plus a commercial course. Many Mendota young people attended the school, and improvements were made to grounds and building. It is said that the concrete sidewalks then laid still serve the grounds today.

As the school grew the building became inadequate and in 1911 it was decided to move the college from Mendota to Aurora. B. J. Dean was president of the Advent College from 1906 until 1911.

The building and grounds were then purchased by private citizens with the idea of converting the building into a hospital, but this project never materialized. Later the grounds became the site of the Mendota high school.

## THE OLD SEMINARY

The Rev. James S. Henderson became the first permanent pastor of the Mendota Presbyterian church in 1855, and he recognized the responsibility of the church along educational lines. To this end he planned for a college in Mendota in connection with the church.

He went to T. B. Blackstone with the idea of establishing a seminary. Mr. Blackstone agreed and provided a site of seven acres on Thirteenth avenue and a building was begun.

The building was three stories high with a basement. For this building Rev. Henderson supplied the funds largely from his own and his wife's private means, some \$15,000 being expended on the building. When nearly ready for the roof to be built, a wind storm damaged the structure and much of it had to be rebuilt. This entailed a debt of \$4,000 on the property.

The new seminary was opened in the fall of 1857 with an enrollment of 200 students, many of whom came from a considerable distance. E. R. Paddock was chosen as principal and in addition there were nine other teachers. Rev. Henderson retained control as president and proprietor while continuing as pastor of the local Presbyterian church.

Early maps show that the Seminary grounds covered two full

blocks in those days, extending from Washington street to Fifth street. Mr. Henderson died in 1861 and his death proved a sad blow to the school.

For a time Mr. Henderson's successor at the Presbyterian church, Rev. R. C. Colmery, acted as president of the school.

Known as Henderson Collegiate Institute, three teachers comprised the staff in its final years. Accommodations for 30 boarders were offered. M. W. Tewksbury was listed as professor of Latin, Greek, and Mathematics. Board ran from \$2 to \$2.50 per week. Tuition was only \$4 for a term of eleven weeks in the English branches, while piano music tuition was \$10. The school advertised that "due attention will be given to the health, habits, manners and morals of the pupils."

Rev. Colmery operated it as Mendota Collegiate Institute until sometime after 1864, apparently having acquired the property at public auction.

By 1868 it was known as Mendota Wesleyan Seminary, with kitchen and dining room in basement, chapel and recitation rooms in the upper floors. Enrollment was listed as 60 students.

In the spring of 1869 the seminary was acquired by Mendota College which operated it as a part of its program.

The next year, however, it came into the hands of Dr. Hoffman who proposed to establish a homeopathic infirmary and medical college, but he apparently thought better of the plan and operated it as a hotel for a number of years, known as Hoffman House.

The building was purchased by Prescott Brothers several years ago and is now utilized as apartments. It is truly one of Mendota's landmarks.

## EARLY HIGH SCHOOL CLASSES

When both east side and west side schools were in operation, two high schools were maintained. The East High graduated its first class in 1876, about three years before the first Blackstone High graduating class. There were seven girls in the first East High graduating class. Because of the high standards it took boys too long to go through school. The editor explained they were 20 years old before finishing, and they had to quit to work to help support the family.

J. R. McGregor was superintendent of East High at the time of the first commencement. The two successive school heads were S. M.

Heslet and G. W. Andrews. High school was a three-year course until W. R. Foster, formerly of Troy Grove, became superintendent. He placed East High on a four-year plan. His tenure began in 1892 and lasted 14 years, when he was elected county superintendent of schools. Successive school heads were G. B. Coffman and J. H. Light.

The first high school commencement of Blackstone High on the west side was held in 1879 with William Jenkins as superintendent. He was followed by S. E. Beede in 1893, by Henry H. Robinson in 1898, by George C. Griswold in 1899, by C. W. Parkinson in 1903, and by E. H. Murray in 1908. After various fluctuations in the course of study, a four-year plan was established in 1898.

In 1910 the two school districts were consolidated, a significant event. High school was then held in the Blackstone building and the first combined commencement was held in 1910 with State Supt. Blair as orator. The exercises were held in the Germania Opera House on Washington street on the site where the Purity Ice Cream plant now stands.

The newly elected school board appointed E. H. Murray as superintendent. Miss Myra Howes, who had served successfully for 15 years as principal of the west side school, was named principal of the consolidated schools.

## HIGH SCHOOL BUILT ON COLLEGE SITE

The need for a separate township high school in its own building had been discussed for many years. A township high school district was formed in 1915 and ownership of the former college site acquired as a location for the enlarged high school. Various locations were previously considered. Neither the east side nor west side residents could agree on a location until the old Mendota College site was proposed, which met with approval of the citizens and plans were made for the erection of the new school. B. J. Dean was high school principal at the time.

The new school was completed in 1917 and opened for occupancy. The first class to be graduated from the new building was in June, 1918. The building cost \$115,000 and contained an assembly hall, ten classrooms, and an office, plus gymnasium which also served as auditorium. The cafeteria occupied the south part of what is now the auditorium and the actual cooking done under the present balcony.

An addition was put on the west side of the school in 1929, great pains being taken to match the brick of the old with the new. The

new addition housed a new cafeteria as well as ag room, art room, commercial, and additional classrooms. The addition cost \$40,000.

George P. Nauman, president of the school board, announced proudly that funds from tuition money had been laid aside to finance the new addition without recourse to bond issue or increase in tax levy.

By 1931 it was seen that the old athletic field at the north of the school was not adequate. Games were held Saturday afternoons and onlookers crowded along the sidelines, no seats being provided. Property south of the school was purchased and a splendid new athletic field constructed. The project cost \$15,000. The lights were added several years later as a special project. Attendance increased markedly. Bleachers were added from time to time, and in 1953 a fund is being accumulated for the construction of permanent bleachers or stadium.

The new field boasted a 220-yard straightaway track, one of the few such existing among Illinois high schools. Due to the interest and generosity of Bernie Katzwinkel, the grounds were beautifully landscaped. Three tennis courts and a hockey field were completed in 1935, and in 1950 several acres were purchased southeast of the field for additional parking facilities.

In 1953 additional property was acquired east of the high school for an additional practice field. The old football field is also used for practice.

In 1939 a large addition was built on the northwest corner of the high school building. This cost \$120,000 and provided a large, modern gymnasium, locker and shower rooms, and a band room. The old gym was converted into a modern auditorium, which is used for school and public programs and plays. A library was built at the east side of the study hall, which was modernized in 1952 into an outstanding school library.

\* \* \*

The school is almost constantly undergoing improvement and modernization. The cafeteria and home economics kitchens are among the projects recently completed. A large amount of shop tools and visual education equipment has been added.

As Mendota enters its Centennial year, plans are being drawn for an addition to the school which would provide modern school shops and a farm shop, as well as additional classrooms to take care of growing enrollment and the need for vocational training of the highest order.

The school year 1952-1953 saw the first attendance by eighth graders in regular classes in the high school building. This course



was taken to accommodate the growing enrollment in the grade schools where facilities were not adequate to properly care for them.

Graduating classes have for many years given gifts to the school. These have included the master electric clock, war plaque, library card catalog, trophy case, stage podium, recordings for literary and history classes, and many others. For many years each freshman class designed and hung a felt class pennant in the old gym, a custom now discarded.

Not all the improvements have been in equipment. The curriculum has been constantly expanded, as well as extracurricular activities. In 1948 the loudspeaker and broadcasting equipment which was acquired provided valuable training in microphone work.

In 1927 Supt. R. E. Beebe instituted a new type of examinations, the objective or true and false questions.

## STEELE INTRODUCES INNOVATIONS

An appraisal sheet is recorded for each student in the school, with each faculty member contributing basic information on the student's industry, leadership, originality, reliability, initiative, co-operation, class attitude, personal appearance, accuracy, courtesy, stability, loyalty and honesty, as well as special abilities. At the close of each student's course, a composite record is made up which serves as a case history for reference by colleges or prospective employers. The first type of appraisal sheet was introduced by Supt. Steele in 1935, and a newer type adopted by the faculty in 1951.

The school colors formerly were purple and white. These were changed in 1926 to purple and orange in order to avoid confusion with two other schools on Mendota's athletic schedules which had the same colors.

Beginning in 1941 the athletic teams were named the "Trojans," a winning suggestion by Beverly Winters of the class of '45.

Mendota's band, debate, speech, and dramatic students have repeatedly won high honors in district and state competition. Likewise athletic teams have piled up their share of honors on the track, football field, and basketball court. Don Whitmore holds the state javelin record. This will never be beaten as the sport has been withdrawn.

The high school band under the direction of Stanley Fisher won a rare distinction in 1940 when it was invited to play three concerts at the New York World's Fair. Band and townspeople raised the funds

to send them on the trip. Forty-nine members and ten chaperones made the journey.

The extension of territory served by the school and the closing of rural schools has built the need for a growing fleet of school buses. Delmar Kaiser in 1940 drove the first bus, which was a converted milk truck. The school bought its first school-owned bus in 1941 and since that time has added other buses until a fleet of six buses are now operated under the management of Roy Davis.

In the year 1911 the first high school annual was published, containing accounts of school activities and pictures of organizations and graduating seniors. The annual was given the name Atodnem. Elmer Feik, of the class of 1911, contributed the name, which is Mendota spelled backwards. No Atodnem was issued in 1917 or 1918, the year of World War I, and the annual was suspended in 1932 due to depression conditions.

Another school publication, the Hi-Light, a weekly newspaper of school activities edited by the journalism students, began in November, 1926. It was launched by the editor of The Sun-Bulletin, and included also in the pages of The Reporter. The name was chosen as the result of a contest held among students. William Wenninger was the first editor, and John Samuels, journalism teacher, was faculty adviser. The paper still continues, 27 years later, with the same name as originally chosen.

Driver training was added in 1948 in order to teach students the art of driving and safety.

A Diversified Occupations course was added in 1947, the first school in the state to adopt this type of on-the-job training. Students spend a half day in school under the instruction of Joe Rollins, and a half a day on the job learning their craft. Special commencement exercises are held each spring.

The course was so successful that in 1949 it was expanded to include building trades. Junior and senior boys are eligible, and they are now constructing their third home-building project. Upon completion the home economics classes plan the decoration schemes, and open houses are held for the public. Each house is sold at auction to provide funds to continue the training.

\* \* \*

The original organization of Mendota high school prior to 1915 contemplated the inclusion of all of Mendota township and parts of Meriden, Troy Grove and Clarion. The issue was defeated at election, but was finally approved in 1915 with a vote of 904 for and only 220 against. It was officially established as a school district on October

28, 1915, by County Supt. of Schools W. R. Foster, a former east side school principal. The original territory included all of Mendota township and 80 acres of land in Troy Grove township south of the city.

\* \* \*

The first board of education in 1915 included George D. Tower, president; William Phalen, George P. Nauman, Martin Fahler, John J. Buck, Bernard Katzwinkel, and B. Harry Reck.

The school gradually has acquired additional territory. The first annexation was in 1941 when a little over 14 sections of land were annexed from Clarion township. In 1946 a part of Sublette township was added, and then another section from Clarion in 1951. Ten sections of land from Brooklyn township came in the same year, followed by 14 sections from Meriden in 1952. In the winter of 1953 practically all of Ophir township joined. Additional Lee county territory and parts of Troy Grove and Waltham are expected to annex before Centennial time.

There have been a succession of school board members who work diligently and study their school problems by attending district and state school board association meetings. For a number of years George Nauman acted as board president. In recent years this responsibility has been capably filled by Harold F. Dean, who has also served as a vice-president in the state association.

Supt. M. E. Steele in his 26 years service has introduced modern methods of teaching in the school system, and for several years he was president of the state school administrators association, as well as serving on the North Central association board.

In 1953 a precedent was set by employing a business manager to perform duties of purchasing, maintenance, etc. Roy Doll, who headed the commercial department, was chosen as the first to hold this post.

B. Harry Reck is the only remaining member of the original 1915 board. He has served the board as secretary through 38 years and no man in the state, probably, is more conversant with school matters than Judge Reck.

The members of the 1953 high school board, in addition to Mr. Dean and Mr. Reck, are James Dubbs, Dutton Gove, Lawrence Watson, Sam Beetz, Jr., and George Koerper. The rural districts have for many years been represented on the board.

\* \* \*

Through the years there have been hundreds of graduates of the high schools of Mendota. The first alumni association was that

representing the East Mendota high school, formed in 1878. For a number of years annual reunions were held. There was also a Blackstone high school alumni group, but all records have been lost.

After the consolidation of the schools in 1910 both groups of alumni were formed into a Mendota High School Alumni association. Meetings were first held in Eckert's Hall and later in the new high school building. A 50-year jubilee reunion was held June 11, 1926, invitations having been sent to nearly 900 former graduates and 300 attended. It was a memorable occasion and each class gave its reminiscences.

To the group Supt. R. E. Beebe presented plans for a Myra Howes memorial — a suitable award each year for the student who had been of most benefit to the school and community during the year. The requirements were to include character, scholarship, student influence, etc. An enlarged picture of Miss Howes was placed, with a proper inscription, in the school assembly room. Nearly \$400 was raised and placed out at interest to finance the annual award, known as the Myra Howes Key.

William Wenninger of the class of 1927 had the honor of having been the first recipient of the key. The complete list of winners over the years has been as follows:

1927 William Wenninger	1941 Christ Troupis
1928 Lloyd Richert	1942 Ruth Van Etten
1929 Salvatore Randazzo	1943 Kenneth Truckenbrod
1930 Jessica Huss	1944 Francis Matychowiak
1931 William Swisher	1945 Wayne Ashley
1932 August Engelbrecht	1946 Ruth Engelbrecht
1933 Marie Elsesser	1947 Roger Butler
1934 Marion Blair	1948 LaMarr Brewbaker
1935 Faith Cavell	1949 Robert Holler
1936 John Eichorn	1950 Marvin Ehlers
1937 Carl Hoffman	1951 Marilee Emerick
1938 Mary Louise Walzer	1952 Delores Preston
1939 Clarence Harjes	1953 Bill Gehler
1940 Lorraine Grosshans	

For many years the winner of the key was chosen by faculty vote. In recent years the faculty selects three candidates and the winner is selected by vote of the juniors and seniors.

In 1929 an annual \$25 scholarship award for the highest average grades was set up by the alumni group, and Ruth Beetz was the first selectee. This continued until 1940 when it was abandoned due to the new grading system.

Former Supt. R. E. Beebe, now of Naperville, returned in 1947



to be the principal speaker at the alumni banquet. He recalled his service at Mendota during 1922 to 1927.

For many years Mrs. Amelia Walters of the class of 1889 attended each alumni meeting and was called upon to speak. This became a tradition as long as she lived.

The alumni gathering each year begins with a banquet and a program, followed by dancing and visiting.

\* \* \*

Old-timers can truly say that things today are different than when they went to school. The "pampered" youngsters of this generation ride to school on a bus, study in light-conditioned, winter airconditioned rooms. They have movies as parts of their texts. They get ice cream bars for good grades. They learn square dancing and music and sports. Most old-timers figure that these youngsters really have it soft.

But most old-timers also admit that, oddly enough, these kids are smarter than they were when they attended their classes in the 1800's or even a generation ago.

But for those of us who attended schools of earlier days, or perhaps a country school — for all its "hardships" — the little red schoolhouse is an inseparable part of a beautiful, long gone childhood.

But many years ago John Greenleaf Whittier in his poignant poem, "In School Days", put to words the memory that is enshrined in every mind of his or her school days — whenever or wherever spent:

*"Still sits the schoolhouse by the road,  
A ragged beggar sunning,  
Around it still the sumack grows,  
And blackberry vines are running."*





ONE OF THE BEST-KNOWN carriage shops in Mendota in 1886 was the Peter Sunday shop joined by Walter Boettcher's blacksmith and harness shop. The buildings were located approximately on the site of the present food lockers. Note the second-story activity.

Mr. and Mrs. D. C. Tower and Josephine (now Mrs. Josephine T. Coss) standing proudly beside their snappy 1915 Winton Six, with brass lamps polished and gleaming.





This is E. S. Browne, twice mayor of Mendota and without doubt the most colorful mayor in the city's long history. His big straw hat, flopping in the breeze, and his beard and unostentatious dress made him a bright figure in his pursuit of a better Mendota. He is famous for his big Democratic rally and barbecue which drew visitors from great distances. It is said to have been the biggest crowd ever assembled in Mendota. He served a term beginning in 1897, and again in 1901. He was a graduate of Harvard College.

Below — The former Sam Fernberg dry goods store, located at Main and Washington in the building now housing Goslin's drug store. For many years the Denison drug store also occupied this building.







BRINGING UP THE REAR of the parade when the famous Ringling Brothers circus showed here on July 18, 1917. The steam calliope was drawn past the old Clintone Wallpaper store (now site of postoffice) and camels were used to draw this glittering red and gold wagon. Note early cars parked along curb, and lack of spectators.

HURRY! HURRY! HURRY! The famous circus call echoed up and down Washington street in 1917 as Ringling Brothers circus parade featured its herd of performing elephants.





PHIL WEBER'S PALATIAL SALOON in the early years of the century. The photo proves that swinging doors, beveled plate glass, polished mahogany bars, tiled floors, and gleaming spittoons were not entirely legend. Phil's saloon was located in building now occupied by Austin's Chatterbox tavern.

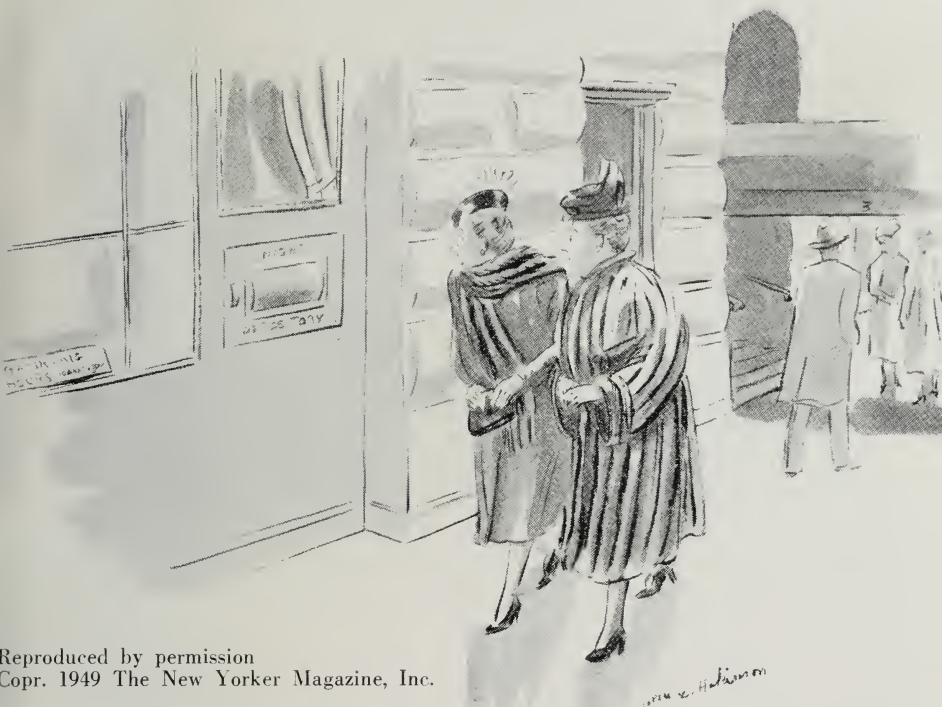
CARRIAGES LINED UP at the Mendota fairgrounds in the early years for the annual harness races. Note crowd and vehicles lining the infield. Just a few automobiles appear, indicating a year about 1910. Note absence of carnival midway.



General View.  
Mendota Races.



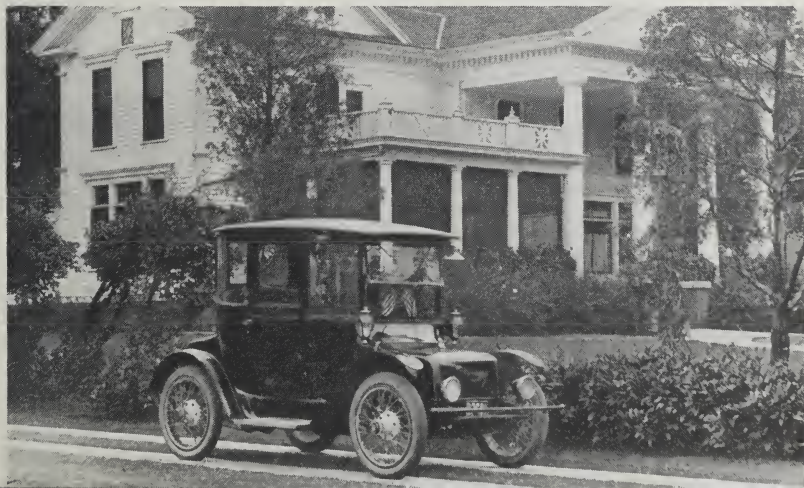
**Typical Cartoon by Mendota's Own Helen E. Hokinson  
Appeared in New Yorker Magazine March 19, 1949**



Reproduced by permission  
Copr. 1949 The New Yorker Magazine, Inc.

*"Wouldn't you think they'd have a place for withdrawals, too?"*

**HORSELESS CARRIAGES?** A number of Mendota ladies owned and drove quiet, luxurious electrics, among them this 1916 wire-wheel model driven by Mrs. D. C. Tower. It is shown in front of their beautiful 13th avenue home.





IN 1909 NINTH AVENUE was the scene of a big patriotic parade. Here we see the G. A. R. veterans (Grand Army of the Republic), the civil war veterans, marching. In the background are the present homes of Lloyd Cotton and George Truckenbrod.

WRECK ON BURLINGTON RAILROAD near downtown crossing, believed to have been about 1917. A derailed train plowed into other cars on adjoining track. Smashed cars and spilled freight littered a wide area.







CARL YOST had reason to be proud of this old 1906 Rambler, even though it had solid rubber tires and carbide lights. It was only two-cylinder, but had beautiful tufted leather seats and right hand drive. Taken in front of home at 1009 Monroe street. Note rounded radiator and hood.

A FREAK of the devastating tornado which ripped through the area north of Mendota early in December, 1951, was this scene at the George Halboth farm along highway 51. The violent winds lifted up the garage and scattered it in a nearby field. Yet oddly, the Halboth automobile shown here which was standing in the garage received only a small scratch and a bent aerial. A number of buildings and roofs in the area were left a shambles by a twister.





THE MENDOTA REGULARS baseball team was a standout aggregation in and around 1907. As they are lined up here we see: top row, left to right, Frank Munson, Max John, Ted Williams, Barney Coss, Claude Carter. Middle row, left to right, Bill Cromein, Phil Weber. Front row, left to right, Ed Cromein, Tim Howlett, Fred Marks.

UNUSUAL TOMESTONE in Restland Cemetery, erected over the grave of the Rev. Nathan Denison, first pastor of the Baptist church. It shows a closed Bible on a pulpit, with a closed Psalter on top of the Bible, marking reverently the "close of the service."



## “TAKE ME OUT TO THE BALL GAME”

**M**ENDOTA, WITH ALL ITS accomplishments, has never been musclebound. Sports of all kinds have kindled intense interest over the years. Each sport has had its day of greatest activity, languished, and sometimes reborn in new interest with the changing times.

As Mendota grew, sports grew . . . from the first ball games by husky farm boys when the town had only a general store — down to the winning of the conference football trophy in 1953 by the high school Trojans football team.

One of the earliest organized athletic activities was centered about the Germania Turnverein society in 1875. They had the basement of the Opera House completely equipped by 1884 with gymnastic apparatus. They had also elected officers, including a cashier. Not the least of their accomplishments was their own brass band consisting of twelve members.

The Turnverein society was started with the following members: Jacob Kohl, Jacob Reul, Joe Weidner, John Hartan, Henry Koropp, J. Rodener, Max A. F. Haass, Casper Ruedy, and Otto Kieselbach. The club was considered quite “exclusive.” In time the club disintegrated and languished.

But in 1913 a Mendota Athletic club was organized for the purpose of having a gymnasium for young men to spend their evenings in wholesome recreation, such as basketball, hand ball, boxing, wrestling, fencing. Their gym was located on the third floor of what is now



the Hotel Faber. Its officers included B. Harry Reck as president. There were three vice-presidents, including Harry Schaller, A. J. Hunter, and A. W. Haag. D. C. Haskell was treasurer and John Mara secretary.

The next club was organized by a group of enthusiastic grade school boys about 1925, known as the Maroon Athletic club. They participated in football, basketball, and baseball. Many of them became outstanding athletes in high school, and the group included Wilbur Murra as group leader, and members Jim Dubbs, Bud Boyle, Betz Frederick, Rich Phalen, Harvey "Snick" Jacob, Earl Anschicks, Bill Truman, John Sauer, Willard Pfeiffer, Wesley Wright, Fritz Wiedenhofer, and Harold Goebel.

## OUTDOOR CLUBS

OVER THE YEARS there have been active sportsmen's clubs, and one such instigated the improvement of the railroad pond into modern Lake Mendota, during the depression years, with the aid of WPA grants and a lot of hard labor.

There was an active Izaak Walton league here in the mid-twenties, and on one memorable occasion they had as their speaker the Rev. Preston Bradley, of Chicago, who gave a talk in a meeting in the Elks basement dining room . . . a talk that never will be forgotten as he traced his childhood days with hook and line in unpolluted streams of the state.

The Central Illinois Rifle and Gun club was organized here as early as 1891. It was started with 100 members, each of whom held a \$25 share in the club, used to maintain a rifle range and clubhouse. Many shooting tournaments were held. The commissioners of this club included Matthew Wilson, John Goedtner, William Stare, W. H. Irwin, Fred Henning, Anton Kuelgen, and Phillip Weber.

In 1876 a reward notice was posted by L. B. Crooker, president of the Mendota Field Sporting association, offering \$5 reward for conviction of anyone shooting prairie chicken before August 15. Game laws were enforced on a local basis in those days.

There are numerous coon and rod clubs around Mendota at the present time. Pigeon shoots and clay pigeon shoots have been popular over the years. Once Al Foulk shot 168 straight at a meet at Scarboro.

There was an Interurban Trap Shooters association in 1913, and at a meet at Split Rock east of La Salle three from Mendota participated. Al Foulk tied for third with 141 out of 150; C. C. Fisher broke 115 out of 125; and C. E. Shaft broke 111 out of 150.



George D. Smith was an ardent outdoorsman, and was instrumental in putting on trap shoots with the Izaak Walton league about 1925, near Kakusha park.

Mendota has an ardent Rifle team today, a member of the Starved Rock Rifle club. Howard Horn regularly racks up high scores.

The Outdoor Recreation was organized about 1931 and was active for about 12 years. The purpose of the organization was to improve hunting and fishing in this community and to provide entertainment and recreation for outdoor sportsmen. This organization purchased the Railroad Pond (now Lake Mendota) from the C. B. & Q. railroad and turned it over to the City of Mendota in 1935. Dr. Edgar Cook and B. Harry Reck made several trips to Chicago to complete the transaction with the Burlington. The railroad officials consented to make the deal with the understanding that it must be left for the free use for the public and character-building organizations — such as Boy Scouts and Campfire Girls.

## RELEASE PHEASANTS

The Mendota Coon, Rod and Gun club is an organization about 10 years old serving the community as an organization to improve hunting and fishing facilities in the community. The club was incorporated not for profit Corporation in 1948. It has about 400 members and sponsors a field trial, fish fry, and Sauerkraut party yearly for its members and friends. The club raises about 300 pheasant chicks each year and receives half-grown chicks from the county and state. In 1952 the club released about 750 pheasants.

The following members are serving as officers and directors for 1953: president, Guy Prescott; vice-president, Delmar Kaiser; secretary, Marvin Schlesinger; treasurer, Adolph Rave; directors, Willard Deaner, Milton Dewey, D. H. Mosher, Kenneth Saueressig, Emil Schlesinger, Raymond Sondgeroth, Norman Willard.

Horseshoe pitching has always been a favorite sport, although usually on an informal basis. There was a notable tournament in 1922 near the B. J. Feik residence in the north end, when Clarion engaged a Mendota team. Like lawn croquet and tennis, few of the matches have ever made the public prints and so are lost in pleasant anonymity.

Roller skating has ever challenged human activity, and never so much as in the 1880's and 1890's, when there was an organized roller skating club in town. Pool's hall was leased and the rink open afternoon and evening. Membership in the club, however, was limited to 25.

# BASEBALL OF THE PAST

AS ONE OF THE OLDEST and most popular of American sports, baseball has had a long and colorful history in Mendota, going back almost 90 years. Although the exact date when the first baseball game was played in this community is not known, records show that several baseball clubs were organized here shortly after the end of the Civil War. It is entirely probable, however, that amateur baseball was played in Mendota even before that time.

Most of the baseball games in the early days were played on the grounds between the I. C. and C. B. & Q. railroad tracks which were known as the "Y". There was room enough for three baseball diamonds in this area and for many years it afforded a fine recreation place for the people of Mendota.

Early records of published scores indicate that the first baseball players had some difficulty in mastering the fine art of pitching and fielding, because the scores were quite phenomenal in comparison with those of today. Scores of 64 to 55, and 62 to 46, were not unusual, and games often lasted as long as four hours. Following are reports of a few early games:

August 8, 1867 — Prairie Base Ball Club of Mendota now formed. G. N. Jones and L. B. Crocker make best runs, fall down flattest, and spread out widest.

July 29, 1869 — There will be an effort to have a baseball tournament at same time as Horse Fair. Mendota Base Ball Club to play Arlington tomorrow afternoon. James Durning, Capt. of First Nine; C. H. Crawford, Capt. of Second Nine. Club plays every afternoon at 3 p. m. on grounds between I. C. and C. B. & Q. tracks.

August 12, 1869 — Arlington Club beats Mendota 64-55. Have been playing two years and Mendota two weeks. Game lasted from 2 to 6 p.m.

August 26, 1869 — Formation of two baseball clubs for boys under 15 years of age. Red Breeches — Louis Bunker; Capt. Hodge Club — Harvey Hodge, Capt. At game Friday, Red Breeches won 62-46.

September 1, 1870 — Match game of baseball between Prairie State and German Red Belts will be played Friday afternoon at half past 2 o'clock.

This was pretty much the pattern for baseball around Mendota until the 1880's when the game started to improve and scores became much lower.

In 1885, Dr. E. P. Cook's "Rough and Readies" won every game they played that season, and this proved to be one of the most exciting

years in local baseball history. The line-up of the team was as follows: Bert Merrifield, catcher; Albert Fischer, pitcher; Howard Dean, 1st base; C. P. Gardner, 2nd base; Harry Wilcox, 3rd base; E. P. Cook, shortstop; Harry Shipley, left field; John Berry, center field; Dan C. Tower, right field; and Jesse Crooker, utility.

Ross Hayes was one of the first curve ball pitchers in and around Mendota in this era, and John Madden and Fred Bailey were also very active in baseball at this time.

Remember the Cardinals of 1890-91? The boys with the red uniforms? They had a mighty good team then. Cigarmaker "Patsy" Hart had a cigar called the "Cardinal" and the picture of this team was on the inside cover of the cigar box.

The members of this team were: Frank "Banty" Moore, catcher; Max John, pitcher and outfielder; Paul Cooper, pitcher and 1st base; Ed T. Madden, 1st base; Fred Haskell, 2nd base; Fred Smith, 3rd base; Dow Schick, shortstop; and John Berry, Harry Shipley and "Pompy" Allen, outfielders.

In 1894-95, George Huff of the University of Illinois played with Mendota.

In 1896, Mendota fielded another strong team with a line-up that looked like this: Art "Squire" Wells, catcher; Zeek, pitcher; Paul Cooper, 1st base; Fred Haskell, 2nd base; Bill Black, 3rd base; Howard "Shorty" Haskell, shortstop; outfielders, Housen, Van Buren and Warner.

This team was really outstanding. They played four Western League teams that year, beating Peoria, St. Joseph, Mo., Des Moines, Iowa, and losing a tough 2-1 game to Dubuque, Iowa. "Shorty" Haskell and Paul Cooper were both members of the University of Illinois team.

## BILL BLACK HITS A HOMER

The Fourth of July game that year was typical. They played Sycamore at Hinckley. Going into the last of the ninth frame, the score was 11-9 favor of Sycamore. "Shorty" Haskell singled, Fred Haskell doubled, and Mendota scored one on fielder's choice. Then Bill Black hit a home run to win the game.

On May 17, 1901, the Mendota baseball club was reorganized with the following members: Art Rice, Jim Wheeler, Geo. Ansteth, W. H. Wilson, Fred Haskell, Jr., W. H. Whitmore, R. W. Witte, Max John,

Phil Weber, Chas. Ferguson and Hugh Griffith. No record of the games played that year, however, is available.

In 1908, Mendota had nine baseball clubs. They were: the Regulars, Cubs, White Sox, East Side Tigers, West Side Regulars, Mendota Stars, South End Regulars, Mendota Cardinals and Mendota Unions.

## THE MENDOTA CUBS

The roster of the Mendota Cubs in 1908 included these players: Fred Katzwinkel, catcher; Dick Simpson, pitcher; Ben Zolper, 1st base; Frank Schmitz, 2nd base; Betz Frederick, 3rd base; Roy McInturf, shortstop; Albert Schmitz, left field; Carl Yost, center field; Ed Koerper, right field; Dan Pohl, sub; Ben Zolper, manager; and Roy McInturf, captain. That year the Cubs challenged the Mendota Regulars to a series of two out of three games, but the outcome is not recorded.

On September 14, 1908, the Mendota Regulars beat Earlville in a special match game 13-4. Batteries were: Marks and Magerkurth for Mendota; Wall and Sharlow for Earlville. This game was played for a \$100 purse and it is reported that many \$100 side bets were made. Something like \$1,500 to \$3,000 changed hands that day. Mendota had quite a scoring spree in this game, with Blake making a home run, Carter, a triple and a double, Marks, a double, Munson a double, and Waldorf and Whitmore scoring singles.

The following year, Mendota beat Henry 8-5, with Munson scoring two home runs and a three-base hit. The team lost to the K. C. Giants, however, by a score of 2-1. Shaeffer pitched five innings, allowing five hits, and Coss pitched four innings, with six strikeouts and one hit.

In 1910, Coss played with the LaSalle Eagles, and the Mendota Regulars disbanded. Poor attendance was the cause.

From this period on, the history of Mendota baseball is rather sketchy. Here are a few excerpts from the local records:

April 17, 1913 — Allen high school, LaMoille vs. Mendota high school, Blackstone Field. Mendota won 8-6.

April 17, 1913 — Waldorf signs with Troy, N. Y.

May 1, 1913 — United Commercial Travelers played picked nine at Fair Grounds. Travelers won, 32-23. R. Witte, H. F. Epperson, Lester Morrison pitched for the Travelers. Herman Thomassen caught.

May 15, 1913 — Bernie Coss shuts out Spalding of Chicago, 3-0. Fred Marks pitches Bloomington to no-hitter over Dubuque. Peoria



beats Springfield 4-1, Pendergast of Arlington, winner. Peru Stars beat Kewanee Regulars 8-1, Troy Munson and Harry Reiber with Peru.

From the Bloomington Bulletin, May 22, 1913:

"It was Mendota versus Mendota yesterday. Marks and Mike Pendergast got their starts with the Mendota Regulars several years ago and were picked up in the green pastures by Wm. Merna. Marks hails from Troy Grove, a little burg with an elevator and a country store, while Mike claims his native burg is Arlington, also a suburb of Mendota."

On October 13, 1920, Pittsburgh played Mendota in a special game sponsored by the Elks Club. Over 1500 fans turned out for this event. Pittsburgh won 7-1. Line-up for Mendota: Peden, left field; Jack, 2nd base; Achinger, shortstop; Haley, catcher; Miller, center field; Baxter, 1st base; Ternetti, right field; Williams, 3rd base; Coss, pitcher.

July 19, 1921 — Home Brews beat Mendota Cubs 24-8.

July 23, 1922 — Bleachers filled with 500 fans collapse at baseball game. Mrs. Geo. Lutz knocked unconscious and Henry Pohl suffers sprained ankle. Peru 8, Mendota 7.

October 13, 1922 — Detroit beats Mendota Regulars 8-5. Line-up for Mendota: Peden, left field; Achinger, shortstop; Miller, center field; Beck, right field; Brundage, 3rd base; Gerrow, 2nd base; Jackson, 1st base; Haley, catcher; Zellers, pitcher.

In 1933, Kakusha Parks were champions of the Illinois state league.

Baseball in Mendota was formerly held on a diamond in the "Y" between the Illinois Central and Burlington tracks. In 1907 the game moved to the fairgrounds. Then in 1925 activities were transferred to a diamond at Kakusha park, until baseball languished.

## INTEREST RECENTLY REVIVED

There was a re-birth of interest in baseball in 1947 when the local American Legion post sponsored a team for about four years in the Illinois Valley junior league. Russell Brecht was manager. One year they won the league championship and went into the finals at Dayton, Ohio. Here they were defeated, 8 to 1, by the team from San Mateo, California. Interest lagged when so many boys went into the service, and the league was abandoned.

Interest was revived in a lively manner in 1952 when the Junior Chamber of Commerce sponsored a Little League for boys between the

ages of 9 to 12. The league is organized along big league lines. Players may be traded or purchased, and there is a minor league from which players may be drawn.

The year of our Centennial, 1953, has seen the establishment of a Pony League, for boys aged 13 to 15, and there are lively games played on a regular schedule.

## MAGERKURTH PLAYED HERE

One of the most colorful major league baseball umpires of all time, George Magerkurth, at one time played baseball with a Mendota team. In 1909 "Red" McMahon, manager of the Mendota Regulars, secured the services of the young Magerkurth of Kewanee to be catcher for the team. "Mage" was a good ballplayer and a real "pepper-box" behind the plate. He became very popular with the fans of the area.

He played with Mendota in 1909 and 1910, and then moved to Moline where he began umpiring in a factory league. In the early 20's he was umpiring in the Mississippi Valley league, and then moved on to the Southern association, from there to the International league, and in 1928 was employed by the national league, where from 1928 to his retirement in 1947 he became one of the most popular and colorful umpires that baseball has known. He worked in four world series games and four all-star games.

## MENDOTA'S BEST — BERNIE COSS

Undoubtedly the best and most popular ball player ever to come out of Mendota was "Bernie" Coss. Bernie, a little left hander who lived four miles south of Mendota, pitched his first game at Dimmick, when he was 13 years old. His father promised him 50c if he would win his first game, but he was the losing pitcher that day. As the Coss family headed north in the old buggy they were sad indeed! But this was no indication of what was to follow.

Bernie pitched for the East Mendota high school, and in sandlot games during the summer around Mendota, Troy Grove and Dimmick. Daily, when he could find time, he would be out in the yard pitching to brother Frank, or in the orchard throwing green apples at the birds. He had a good fast ball, and developed a great "spitter". The tip off of his pitching ability came on August 17, 1909, when the Mendota

Regulars were playing the powerful Kansas City Giants at the Fair Grounds. Shaefer was on the mound for Mendota, and when the visitors scored two runs in five innings, Manager McMahon called in young Bernie Coss from the center field, where he was playing that day. When the lean left hander, a mere boy of 18, went to the mound, the fans of this area saw a pitching exhibition that the "old timers" still talk about. Bernie showed those big colored boys a spitball which they had never seen before, blanking them the rest of the way, giving up one hit and striking out six. Final score, Kansas City Giants 2, Mendota 1.

After Bernie completed his schooling at East Mendota high school in 1909, he enrolled at St. Viator's College at Kankakee, where he pitched on the ball team in 1910 and 1911. St. Viator's enjoyed unusual success on the diamond in those years, and Bernie pitched them to wins over Notre Dame and several other schools they had never beaten before. He was honored in 1911 by being named captain of the team.

While at the Kankakee school he pitched several innings against the Chicago Cubs in an exhibition game, and Manager Frank Chance was so impressed with his work that they signed him in June, 1911. The Cubs had a great pitching staff at the time, headed by "Three Finger" Brown and Ed Ruelbach, so Chance decided to send Bernie to Danville for further seasoning. Bernie wasn't impressed with this, so he came home to cast his lot in baseball with the semi-pros.

Almost every ball club in Northern Illinois sought his services, and his pitching most of the time was sensational. In 1913 he started pitching in a semi-pro loop in Chicago, working for several different clubs. Toward the latter part of the season he signed to play regularly with Nate Kaplan's Chicago Magnets. He won 21 straight games for the Magnets before losing his first game. Most of his pitching was confined to the Magnets until he entered the army in 1918. Bernie was sent to Camp Gordon, Georgia, and immediately became a regular pitcher for the powerful team representing that post.

After the war, Bernie again returned to semi-pro baseball, and he pitched his last season in 1923, for the Mendota Cubs. In September of 1926 Jimmy Corcoran, of the Chicago American, gave Bernie Coss a wonderful eulogy as a baseball player: "Probably one of the greatest spitball shooters that semi-pro fans have seen was the memorable Bernie Coss, who pitched for years for Nate Kaplan's Magnets. Bernie was a southpaw who weighed about 140 pounds, and stood approximately five feet seven inches. He starred at St. Viator's College, went to the Cubs, and then decided to heave for Nate. Semi-pro performers of ten years ago, will remember Coss when he was in his prime. That left-

handed spitter was unhittable. With an addition of poundage, and a desire to put his heart and soul in the game, Coss would have been one of the greatest major league hurlers in the history of the game."

Yes, let's just call him "Mr. Baseball of Mendota!"

## SERVED IN MINOR LEAGUES

A number of other Mendota young men had promising careers in baseball, with service in the minor leagues. This list includes "Stymie" Schmitt, a pitcher, who played with Wisconsin Rapids; and Don Whitmore, also a pitcher, who played with Kewanee and also with Savannah, Georgia. Jack Tieman was a pitcher with St. Joseph, Missouri, and with Hamilton, Ontario. Curly Herman played with Peoria, and later with Bloomington in the three-eye league, as an outfielder. The careers of most of these were halted by injuries.

Troy Munson received a letter in baseball at the University of Michigan, about 1910.

Rufus Waldorf played on the Notre Dame baseball team in the early 1900's, and also was a member of the football team there.

Another Mendota boy who starred in baseball and football at Notre Dame was Frank "Fats" Munson.

Richard "Shoe" Virgil was a promising young boxer in the late 30's. He was a strong puncher and very game. His career, as with so many others, was interrupted by service with the armed forces.

## HORSE RACING

HORSE RACING and the "improvement of the breed" was for many years a prime interest of many Mendota fanciers of horse flesh. Indeed it has not entirely died out, as one may gather by viewing the efforts of Charles Haight and his Meridale stock farm and stables near Meriden . . . or of the exploits on the modern harness tracks of Harry Burright of the fabulous Burright family which is written up elsewhere in this history.

Charles Haight still is a popular starter at many race meets, and in the history of Mendota there were many others active in race meets, not the least of whom was George Madden.

Newton Imus in the early 1900's and earlier was a starter of races at fairs. Al Swearingen, a Mendota resident, was a bookmaker at state fairs and other racing meets.



As early as 1860 there was a trotting track "south of town," made possible by donations made by citizens. The newspaper in August, 1869, reported that a superb half-mile track was being put in order alongside the city limits, a half-mile from the Passenger House. A "grand amphitheatre" was erected capable of holding 2,500 fans.

In the spring of 1874 a few spirited citizens started to promote interest in the American Turf association. An association was organized with 50 stockholders. Twenty-four acres of land were leased with the option of purchase. There was expended about \$10,000 on the track and accessories, consisting of 110 large stalls for horses, an amphitheatre 200 feet long, and sufficiently elevated to permit a commodious dining room underneath, as well as numerous offices and refreshment booths.

Four thousand dollars were awarded in premiums at the first race meeting held in August, 1874. There were 110 entries (apparently every stall was filled), and 12,000 fans attended during the meeting.

The association held a one-day meeting on July 5, 1875, with \$850 in premiums and 25 entries. The second annual regular meeting was held the following August with premiums of \$6,000 and the daily attendance averaged between 3,000 and 4,000 people.

Subsequently the association offered \$5,000 in premiums and a diamond medal championship, open to all stallions in the United States and Canada, to be trotted over the course on October 21, 1875. The entries were not filled, so the meet never came off.

At this time C. T. Taylor was president, A. Meisenbach, vice-president, T. F. A. Newport, secretary, and S. Lee, treasurer.

Fire in 1877 destroyed 25 box stalls at the driving park stables.

Around the turn of the century racing was still flourishing, when the local course was a member of the Illinois Valley Racing circuit. Powers behind the sport at this time were George H. Madden, Newton Imus, A. W. McIntire, and Al Swearingen. Racing dates in 1905 were July 11 to 14.

W. R. McIntire had a racehorse sire, Assurance, which was prominent in breeding activities. This sire had a record of 2:25 $\frac{1}{4}$  and was advertised as the sire of Onward Silver with a record of 2:25 $\frac{1}{2}$ . They claimed he was one of the "handsomest and best bred stallions alive."

E. C. Wicks, a Mendota attorney and later an alderman, had a breeding stable known as "Walnut Park Breeding Stable" early in this century. He issued a catalog and featured three sires: Prospect, Spectator Boy, and High Mark. Fees were \$15 to insure a live foal. One of his breeding mares was named Meriden Maid.

There were many others, good ones out of excellent stock, owned by Mendota breeders and racers during the years.

Horse racing flourished or languished according to the vicissitudes of the Mendota fair over many years, and is still going strong when the Mendota Tri-County fair holds its annual meeting over each Labor Day week-end.

## FOOTBALL IN MENDOTA

FOOTBALL, THAT SPORT OF THE GLADIATORS which fills hundreds of stadia each Saturday in the fall at the present time, had rough and uncertain beginnings in Mendota. At first it was considered a rowdy game, and certain it was that it was a bone-crushing sport. The rules were different and the flying wedge kept it a game only for the stalwarts.

It is said that the first team in Mendota was in 1896. Rugby had been played previously. Howard "Shorty" Haskell organized a team in that year. Some of the players were Carl Weidner, George Reichardt, Albert McFarland, Sam Haight Sr., Arthur Wilcox, Charles Stare, Frank Blanchard, Harold Whitmore, Axel Anderson, Frank Stare, Arthur Waldorf and others.

A. W. Bush won a letter at Illinois in football in 1892.

The 1909 team played and won a number of games. This team boasted such stalwarts as Fred Brady, Art Leifheit, W. G. Van Etten, K. W. Pohl, Frank Munson, Bunch Roth, and Jim Mahar.

West Mendota high played a Thanksgiving game against Dixon college. Dan Pohl was coach. Again in 1910 in a turkey day game Earlville beat Mendota 6 to 0, scoring in the last two minutes. Dan and Karl Pohl both were injured in the game.

The team of 1916 was an outstanding early team. It ran up a tally of 108 to 0 against Marseilles. With Hartman as coach, the team won eight and lost only one. Streator was another victim of the locals, 26 to 7. On this team played Rich Stenger, "Hub" Crisler, Tracy Tower, Cliff Tower, Neil Holliston, Glen Momeny, Norris Fassett, Nick Coss, Henry Kohl, Frank Van Etten, Red Tower, Riddle and Slager.

In the 20's football grew to major status in the high school. For many years Rufus Dewitz was the successful mentor in football. Others were Henry Meyers, Harold Owens, and for the past four seasons the teams have made outstanding records under the coaching of George "Ted" Lewis, a former University of Iowa grid lineman. Athletic Director Lloyd Doenier handles the frosh-soph team.

The teams of Ted Lewis have been so successful that they have

won four consecutive conference championships in the North Central conference, southwest division, in 1949, 1950, 1951, and 1952.

Some outstanding players have been developed over the years, not the least of which were Rich Stenger, George Guilfoyle, Bob Neuman, Frank Seno, Lamar Brewbaker, and Bill Gehler.

Bill Gilkey, a product of the Mendota football team, has gone on to successful coaching. After playing at Ripon and other coaching experience, he became football coach at South Beloit, Wisconsin.

Bruce McDonald, another Mendota boy, is coach at Rock Falls high school.

As far as can be recalled, there was only one local football team not connected with the school. This was the American Legion football team which played in 1920 and 1921, captained by Nick Coss. Frank Spenader was its sterling fullback.

## BASKETBALL FAST-GROWING

Basketball, the fastest growing sport in the nation, came to Mendota about 1908. Games were played in the Opera House. Mendota Blackstone team lost to Amboy.

The Mendota Athletic club in 1913 and 1914 had a basketball team which played various teams and which also played the high school team for the local championship. Stars were Henning, McCarty, Reck, Shaft, and Hunter. In one city championship game the M.A.C.'s beat the high school, 52 to 11. Tower and Spenader starred for the high school.

A lineup of the high school basketball team of 1910 reveals such names as Robert Black, Jack Faber, Clarence Potter (captain), Edward Alexander, Edwin Schildberg, and George Shepherd. They played ten games and won about half of them.

When the new high school was built with its then elegant gym (now the auditorium) basketball really took hold and began to grow. This was about 1919. Teams of the high school engaged in regular conference play. Some of the teams have been outstanding, engaging in regional or sectional play on several occasions. In 1944 the team, under the coaching of Lloyd Doenier, won the Princeton regional tournament, but was defeated by Normal at the LaSalle sectional.

Possibly the greatest team of them all (an assertion always open to debate) was the high school cage quintet of the year 1938. This much can be said, the team advanced the farthest in state tournament play. They won the regional tournament at Princeton, then advanced to the

sectional where they defeated East Moline. They lost the next game, to Alpha. On this team were such outstanding players as Lloyd Reeder, George Miller, Bob Hessenberger, Don Whitmore, and Abe Shapiro. They were tutored under Coach Heinz.

Looking back over high school teams of the past, and omitting those of the last few years for contemporary reasons, one recalls a number of players who could be termed outstanding. Among these were Dick Smith, Louis Spenader, Willard Merritt, Reed Sharp, Roland Bates, Marty Masear, Lloyd Reeder, George Miller, "Red" Wangler, Wayne Spenader, Al Loach, and Wayne Ritter.

There have been various independent town teams over the years. One of the best was in 1921 which won the Sandwich tournament.

A string of 17 straight victories was run up by a notable basketball team in 1926 and 1927. This was the Evangelical Sunday School team which comprised such stars as Louis Blotch, Bill Beitsch, Harold Lown, George Elsesser, Bud Kramer, and Louis Spenader. They were beaten in the Harding tournament.

The Mendota Waldorf cafe team which played through the winter of 1928 and 1929, had the distinction of having beaten the Harlem Globetrotters, 36 to 35.

## CRISLER, SENO, NEUMAN

Herbert O. Crisler, who has risen to fame as a football coach, first at Chicago and later at Minnesota, Princeton, and Michigan, played on the Mendota high school football team back about 1917. "Fritz" was always successful as a coach, but won his real fame at the University of Michigan where he led the team to many championships and a Rose Bowl victory, and in recent years has been the athletic director at that school. When he played at Mendota he was known as "Hub," the nickname "Fritz" having been applied when he became known nationally and his name being similar to that of the famous violinist, he received the same nickname.

Frank Seno, one of the greatest football players that ever represented Mendota, graduated from Mendota High in 1941 and entered George Washington University, Washington, D. C. where he played sensational football for two seasons. In the spring of 1943 he was signed by the Washington Redskins and immediately rose to stardom. He was traded to the Chicago Cardinals after the 1944 season and played with the Chicago club in 1945 and 1946. It was in November of 1946 against the New York Giants that he took a kick-off five yards



behind his goal line and went all the way for a 105-yard touchdown run that still stands today for a record in the National Professional Football league. He was traded to the Boston Yanks in 1947 where he played for two seasons. In 1949 he went back to the Washington Redskins where he played his final season. Frank is married and has two children, both girls, and operates a large bowling alley at Bellwood, Illinois, just west of Chicago.

Robert "Bob" Neuman graduated from Mendota High School in 1930 and was one of the best all-around athletes that ever represented our local school. He played four years of varsity football, two years of basketball and was the leading scorer on the track team. Bob entered Illinois Wesleyan university, where he starred in football for four years. In 1934 he was signed by the Chicago Cardinals where he played regular end for three seasons. He then accepted the position of head football coach at Normal community high school where his teams have had an excellent record. He served three years in the armed forces during World War II and returned to his former position early in 1946. Three years ago he was elevated to the athletic directorship and also is secretary-treasurer of the Corn Belt conference and teaches driver's training. Bob is married and has one son, Theodore Robert, who is two years old.

## TRACK AND FIELD

THE FIRST track and field team was started at Mendota high school in the spring of 1920, but foot-races and throwing contests were being held for almost 100 years. Years before these contests were usually held before each baseball game or during the Fairs.

As early as 1867 the records show that G. N. Jones and L. B. Crooker were winners in races that preceded the ball game on August 8. Dow Schick, who played on the Cardinal baseball team in 1890-91, was an exceptionally fast man and so was Max Johns also a member of the same team. George Huff, who played several years with Mendota in baseball, was a very fast runner especially for a big man.

In 1896 the Mendota fire department had a running team that the town was proud of. These men competed with teams from surrounding towns in foot-races and ladder climbing contests and always made a great showing. Members of the team were E. S. Browne, Ziska Schuetz, Arthur Waldorf, Clarence Huck, Ed. Welsch, Charles Reed, J. G. Ruel, Harry Morrison, Fred Hoerner, John Knauer, Charles Moore, Charles

Traynor, Tom Connor, and Harold Whitmore. Ziska Schuetz was the fastest man on the team and could run 100 yards in about 10 seconds.

After the turn of the century many of these races were run during the fairs and William Andrews was one of the fastest men around here at that time.

A track and field team was started at Mendota high in 1920 with Clarence Jack as coach. In 1921 the records at Mendota High were as follows:

50 yard dash .....	John Buck .....	5.8
100 yard dash .....	John Buck .....	10.6
220 yard dash .....	John Buck .....	23.0
440 yard dash .....	Gib Truckenbrod .....	56.8
880 yard run .....	Ted Nieman .....	2:25.4
Mile run .....	Leo Guilfoyle .....	4:46.4
220 yard low hurdles .....	John Buck .....	25.0
Pole Vault .....	Dick Smith .....	9'10"
High Jump .....	Gib Blotch .....	5'4"
Broad Jump .....	Gib Blotch .....	19'3"
Discus .....	Don Williams .....	96'9¼"
Shot Put .....	Clayton Truckenbrod .....	34'2"
Javelin .....	Dick Smith .....	132'8"
880 Yard Relay .....	G. Blotch, J. Buck, H. Esterday, D. Smith .....	1:40.0

## CURRENT TRACK RECORDS

A glance at the records now shows the following:

100 yard dash .....	10.2..	Lloyd Reeder .....	1938
		Dave Westerman .....	1948
		Al Richards .....	1949
		Jim Brown .....	1953
220 yard dash .....	23.0..	John Buck .....	1921
440 yard dash .....	51.0..	Don Serup .....	1948
880 yard run .....	2:02.0..	Bob Larkin .....	1941
Mile run .....	4:40.0..	Bob Larkin .....	1941
120 Yd. high Hurdles ....	15.6..	Pen Faber .....	1948
200 yd. low hurdles .....	22.4..	Dave Westerman .....	1947
180 yd. low hurdles .....	22.3..	Curt Truckenbrod .....	1953
Pole Vault .....	12'3"..	Spike Hawke .....	1947
High Jump .....	6'1"..	Leonard Dunn .....	1952
Broad Jump .....	21'3"..	Gerald Hessenberger .....	1935

Discus .....	136'10"	Spike Hawke .....	1947
Shot Put .....	20'1"	Ed. Peasley .....	1953
Javelin .....	200'	Don Whitmore .....	1939
880 yd. relay .....	1:34.2	L. Brewbaker, P. Faber, D. Serup, D. Westerman ....	1947
Mile relay .....	3:41.0	W. Castle, C. Truckenbrod, W. Klinge, C. Howarth .....	1953

The 1947 track team was probably the best team that has represented Mendota high. The oldest record is John Buck's 220 yard dash of 23 flat. The boys have been trying for over 30 years to break this record but so far have not succeeded.

Don Whitmore holds the state record in the javelin which is 200 feet. He won the state championship in this event in 1939. Don was one of the best all-round athletes that ever represented Mendota.

Wallace "Spike" Hawke won the state championship in 1947 in the pole vault at 12 feet 3 inches. He also holds the Mendota record in the discus at 136 feet 10 inches. He attended Purdue university and graduated in 1951 earning three major track letters and a freshman football numeral. He participated in the discus and shot put on the Purdue track team.

John Buck of the class of 1921 was an exceptionally fine hurdler and dash man.

Bob Larkin (1941) holds two fine records in the 880 and mile runs.

Don Serup (1948) was a great 440 man, winning every race until he reached the state finals.

Dave Westerman (1948) was an outstanding hurdler and dash man.

In college ranks, B. Harry Reck specialized in the quarter mile and half mile at the University of Michigan, and won his letter about 1910.

## CHASING THE LITTLE WHITE BALL

THE FIRST GOLF COURSE in Mendota was located on the Black farm, four miles northeast of town, in 1924. Dan Haskell and School Supt. R. E. Beebe were two of those responsible for starting the venture. It was a nine-hole course with sand greens and the grass was

kept down by a flock of sheep owned by Albert Mathesius. George Richey of the South Bluff country club laid the course.

At the same time, Compton had a nine-hole course—the Country Side golf club. Dr. C. A. Fortier, Dan Haskell and William Faber, Jr. belonged to this club and, along with Bob Crawford and Rudolph Witte, were some of the first men in Mendota to own golf clubs.

Interest in golf was growing rapidly around Mendota and on October 21, 1925, a committee with R. E. Hall as chairman, R. N. Crawford, Spencer Moss, K. W. Pohl and O. J. Ellingen, visited the Oak View country club at Aledo, Illinois. Although Aledo was only a town of 2,000 population, they were supporting a golf club which a town ten times its size could be proud of.

The committee reported on their trip to Aledo and immediately a new site for a golf course was sought. Snyders Grove was a possible site, but the cost of removing a large number of trees made it prohibitive. The Brady farm was also considered, but the final decision was to lease 75 acres of the Fred Herr farm, 60 acres of which was pasture. This location, south of Highway No. 34 and west of the Bureau county line, is the present site of the Mendota Golf club. The club was organized in 1926 and through the efforts of several men, they succeeded in building a beautiful nine-hole course. K. W. Pohl is the man who is most responsible for the success of the Mendota Golf course—his untiring efforts and personal interest was an incentive for others to see that the project was completed.

Mel Johnson of Peoria, assisted by K. W. Pohl and Dan Haskell laid out the course which is nine holes, par 36, total yardage 3,168.

Ralph Madden was the first to score a hole-in-one and Harold Cummings, Art McMahon and Harold Sonntag also belong to this select group.

Louie Treiweiler of Aurora posted a 64 during the summer of 1952 which is the course record to date. Chick Evans is the best golfer to appear on the course.

Undoubtedly the best golfers to come out of Mendota are Bob Lasswell, Benny Besenfelder and Dick Faber. All three of these boys have won amateur tournaments and Besenfelder was a member of the Notre Dame golf team.

Each year a club champion develops, and while the complete records are not available, Harold Cummings was top man the first year, 1926. Over the years, these names have won this prized honor: R. E. Hall, James H. Dubbs, K. W. Pohl, Bob Lasswell, A. B. Carlson,



Robert Sonntag, Dick Johns and Don Kettleborough. Some of these men won the championship numerous years, although not always successively.

## SOFTBALL ACTIVITIES

DURING THE YEAR 1931, Wayne King's orchestra was playing at Puritan Park and inasmuch as they had a softball team, they challenged a group of boys on the west side for a game at Blackstone field. This was the first softball game played in Mendota and the local boys organized under the name of the Uplift club. Fitch's Thrifty Service team organized during the same summer.

Interest grew rapidly in the sport and in 1932 an eight-team twilight league was formed with games being played at Blackstone, Puritan Park, Kakusha Park and the high school field. The teams in this league were Prima Specials, Fitch's Thrifty Service, North-enders, Uplift Club, Methodist, Six Footers, Conco Press and Puritan Divers. Prima Specials were the champions that year.

In 1933 the Mendota Softball Association was organized and lights were purchased and installed at Puritan park. There were twelve teams in the league that year and Conco Press team was the champion. This was the first year the 12-inch ball was used—previously the 14-inch ball was standard.

The following year the lights were moved to Kakusha Park and a 12-team league was again formed with the Coca Colas taking the title.

In 1935 the Shell Oilers were declared the winners although the schedule was not completed due to many cancellations because of rain. Attendance was not as good, resulting in a financial loss and in an effort to raise funds to cover the deficit, the lights were sold to Walnut in 1936. The money realized from this sale was donated to the City of Mendota for a wading pool at Blackstone park.

The Shell Oil team and the Conco Press team played many traveling games during 1935, meeting topnotch teams from the surrounding territory. The Chatterbox team of the late "30's" was one of the best teams representing Mendota, playing highly competitive teams in the area. Bob Blass' Wooden Indians built up a reputation in local competition. The team was sponsored by "Maize" and was one of the powers of the LaSalle league, taking two championships.

Dempsey's Welders took the title in the LaMoille league in 1946. Since then Mendota teams have been playing in both the LaMoille and Arlington leagues—Black Brothers, Mendota Building Service,

Old Timers, Humes, Central Oil Company, Seibens' Hybrids (Peters-town). The Humes were 1950 champions in the LaMoille tourney.

Mendota has had many fine softball players since the game began in 1931, but the top performer of them all was Joe Thompson. Joe came to Mendota from Earlville and immediately the local teams became top competition with teams from surrounding towns. Joe was as good a pitcher as you would find in this area and his top pitching effort was against the great Bill Fleming in a 1-0 mound duel at the Mendota Fair. Joe was a great pitcher and a truly great competitor.

## BOWLING

THE FIRST BOWLING ALLEY in Mendota was located on Main Street in the basement of what is now the Johnson cigar store, about 1890. There was just one alley and the bowling conditions were far different than today. The bowling balls were made of wood, which made scoring much more difficult. Dan Haskell was a pinsetter at this alley. The pins were set on the spots by hand and when you were through for the day, you were ready for a good shower.

A few years later, Ed Heiman opened bowling alleys in the basement of the building now occupied by the Bob Weber tavern. The boys tell some real stories about bowling at these alleys. It seems the boys with speed balls were the "hotshots" in those days and on different occasions Mr. Heiman had to replace the stove pipes located above the alley a short distance from the foul line when someone forgot to let go of the ball. Some of the old timers say that these alleys were short, but when A. Shirk rented these alleys from Mr. Heiman in 1909, his advertisement in the paper stated the alleys were regulation.

About 1901 there were bowling alleys located in the Steele Jewelry Store building. This was the first bowling alley on which the present type bowling balls were used.

In 1909 Harry McMahon operated two alleys in the building now occupied by the A & P Store. An article from the local paper states that Mendota defeated an Aurora team by 22 pins—totals 2057 to 2035. Dan Haskell was the star on Mendota's team with 438.

Ray Francis operated bowling alleys in this same location in 1931, 1932 and 1933.

We now have modern bowling alleys located in the Mendota Elks Lodge, Bowl Air operated by "Chance" Fitzgerald, and at the Kanteen (youth center).

From the records available, only three persons have bowled perfect games of 300—"Skinny" Black in 1922, Tracey Tower in 1931 and Robert Sonntag in 1933.

## STEADY GOETH THE MILL

MENDOTA IS NO ONE-HORSE TOWN. It never has been. Some less fortunate places are wed to one line of endeavor. There are towns which live, languish or prosper according to the vagaries of a cotton crop, a peach orchard, a coal mine, copper mine or shoe factory. But not Mendota.

Our backbone is farming. Many of our people own or live or work on farms. Not hobby farms, but good, solid, money-makers at \$500 per acre on both sides of the road in every direction. Corn is King, with soy beans and oats in second and third place as rotation crops. Feeding cattle is also big business. Grass fed critters are taken from the range lands to the west and made fit to eat. We also raise and feed more hogs than one would believe possible. There are farms in these parts from which every ear of corn raised for 50 years has gone to market on the hoof, transformed through the feeding lot into a live and kicking potential porterhouse, ham or lard pail.

But hand in hand with this basis and background in the land, and giving variety and strength and additional force to our economy, Mendota has always had a strong and peculiarly diversified group of industries.

A goodly portion of our industrial activity is, as one might expect, associated with or dependent upon farming. Our plants, large and small, manufacture farm implements, process and combine feed for farm poultry and animals, pack and can farm produce. The day is

gone when a young man could marry himself a wife, buy a mule, a walking plow and set himself up in the farming business. The average farmer in these parts probably has an investment of at least \$20,000 in machinery, while many will run to twice this amount. No longer does one permit chickens to scratch for a living, with now and then a handful of oats on Sunday. Now-a-days the feeding of farm poultry, cattle and hogs is worked out with the care and precision of baby's formula by experts in each field. Moreover the times when grandma put in endless hours drying and canning fruits and vegetables are long gone and well. We now eat mostly from cans. Tin cans. Many of them come from here.

\* \* \*

In the beginning was slough and prairie.

Our population grew from nothing in 1853 when the railroad came, to 1,934 in 1860, 3,546 in 1870 and 4,142 in 1880, a proportionate increase being evidenced in the rural areas. The job of providing houses for all these people, with their schools, churches and places of business, naturally gave rise to local planing mills, sash and door factories, brick plants. As late as 1875 a sash and door factory was being operated here by Shettel and Ruperts at a site just north of the old Tower factory, the Tower enterprises having started as a planing mill and sash factory.

Several brick yards were here in the earliest days, two of them being north of town, one to the south, where sign is still seen of the old clay pits and kilns.

The Mendota Tile company was located north of the present Kakusha park, and beyond that the Richard Peart (later Stare) brick-yards. The Goodwin brick plant and kilns were located at the south edge of the city, southeast of the Burlington underpass.

These yards also manufactured drain tile in large quantities to help our farmers dry up their land so that it would be suitable for cultivation. We of today can hardly imagine that this country was largely a series of ponds throughout the spring and summer months, and that our present state of high cultivation is the result of millions of dollars spent on drain tile and drainage ditches.

It is reported that one of our then elderly pioneer ladies, weak and petulant from a siege of the ague, looked out over the prairie after a heavy rainfall and remarked, "This is the most God-forsaken country under the sun; I wish it was sunk! but that ain't much of a wish, for it wouldn't have to go down over fifteen inches to be all under water."



The \$1 per acre at which this land at one time sold, was about all that it was worth, without drainage, with no way in which to get fuel to the farm, or the produce to market. By the turn of the century these building materials and drain tile industries, so essential to our earlier life, had pretty well served their purpose and their time. The last of these, a brick yard, finally went out of business in the twenties.

Prior to the opening of our nation's bread baskets in the northwest and southwest, each community pretty well had to care for its own requirements of flour and meal. Consequently we find that wheat was a tolerably important local crop for a number of years after the founding of our city, with several of our oldest industries engaged in milling flour, with cooperage works for flour barrels an important adjunct.

## EARLY STEAM FLOURING MILLS

Our first flouring mill was Blackstone & Pantón's, built in the south part of town in 1854 and 1855. It was of stone construction and run by steam. Eleven years thereafter it burned, was rebuilt larger than before only to burn again in 1870. Eckert & Dewey had the second mill. The Gregg Mill, the third on this site, was used until about 1880 when the machinery was shipped to Missouri. In 1886 William Meisenbach was operating a flour mill located in the old woolen mill building. Within a few years after that we were finding it cheaper to buy flour milled in Chicago and Milwaukee. Local work in this line gradually disappeared.

Other names associated with the early years of our milling industry are those of Jacob Sipes, whose Mendota Mills on the east side in 1871 turned out a flour known as "White Winter Level Best", and O. D. F. Conkey, who came here in 1853 and was for a time associated with Jonas Eckert in the Phoenix Mills at Eighth street and Burlington tracks, the name having been adopted because the "new" mill rose, Phoenixlike, from the ruins of the old after the fire of 1867.

During the early years flax was also an important local crop. There was a flax mill, a plant for the production of linseed oil, put up by John Dement of Dixon on the Castle property, run by George Wells and H. S. Clark in 1869. A factory for making flax rope was for a time operated on Sixth street. Not so durable as the hemp product, it seems never to have found favor and soon languished.

While creeping out of the pioneer years, hides and leather goods were also locally important. Gilmore & McClure, later Gilmore and

Son, operated a steam tannery which processed 8,000 to 10,000 hides a year.

In 1869 the firm leased the corner of Sixth avenue and Sixth street for a boot and shoe factory, to make the "Mendota Kip Boot" with an employment of twelve people.

In 1868 the Mendota Woolen Mill was running night and day. In 1866 Thomas Imus set up a marble shop on Sixth street. Ames, Pearce & Co., in 1869 manufactured here their "Celebrated Vapor Cook Stove."

Various slaughter houses operated in the community through the years, the last two being conducted by the Cavell brothers and George Erbes.

During the seventies our people seem to have emerged from the home-made lye soap period of their culture and started to use the boughten varieties, for about this time we had, it appears, three soap works, the California Soap Manufactory in which was interested O. D. F. Conkey; the Fay soap factory and the Berry soap factory. All were run subsidiary to the rendering works, in consequence of which their fragrance seems to have been a matter of concern among the citizenry of the times.

## CENTER OF ORGAN INDUSTRY

As additional proof of our graduation from the period of dire necessities to that of comparative luxury, the careful historian must point out that in 1870 our local westside planing mill, under the management of Shettle & Rupert, was manufacturing Croquet Balls, Mallets and Fixings and advertised "can furnish outfits for croquet parties at sight". While J. L. Wray's Prairie Granite, "a composition made in imitation of all kinds of stone from the commonest sandstone to the finest marble" appears at the same period to have come into strong fashion, being especially appropriate for chimneys.

In 1872 the Western Cottage Organ Factory employed 25 to 30 men, indicating a sound progress in the arts and culture, while the east side planing mill, operated by J. D. Tower, was specializing in the manufacture of school furniture, also the "Best Washing Machine".

During the late seventies we had here a thriving and somewhat spectacular button factory. The local press, on May 27, 1876 announced that The Herrick Button company was to have a factory on Washington street, buttons to be made of ivory nuts called "Phytelphas Macrocarpa", imported from South America. The buttons were made

from the hard kernel of this nut. In 1877 the plant employed 35 men. Lorenzo Aldrich and Dr. Brockway, who went to Connecticut to get skilled workmen, were prominent in the industry. Early in 1880 the plant was entirely destroyed by fire, the fire department being handicapped by "lack of water and citizen aid". Rebuilt later in the same year, the establishment was again lost to flames and never reestablished.

\* \* \*

It was but natural that the manufacture of farm implements was an important part of our early activity. Though pretty well shrouded in the mists of antiquity, it is likely that the building recently removed to make way for the new Kroger store was our first manufacturing establishment, it having been built in 1864 by J. J. West, one of the founders of our city. The next year it was sold to Donohue & Madden, who moved to that location a foundry which they had previously operated, starting a wagon factory on the second floor of the new building.

Prior to the move, Donohue & Madden, as successors in interest to the Eagle Machine Company, had produced a line of sugar-making machinery started by the parent concern in 1858. This firm seems to have enjoyed a favorable press, for the paper of April 15, 1869 advises, "Messrs. Donohue & Madden, always on the alert, are going to furnish accommodations for hitching 150 teams in the immediate vicinity of their foundry and machine shop." June 3, 1876, it was reported that the firm had turned out a 15 HP steam engine, being the first steam engine manufactured in the city. Four months later they were closed down by reason of a strike of the miners in LaSalle. The firm continued existence in this city for over 50 years.

J. Kenworthy established a shop for making wagons in 1854. Fourteen years later, in his shop on Washington street across from the postoffice, he employed ten men. One of Mr. Kenworthy's earliest advertisements appeared in The Mendota Press of June 28, 1855, as follows:

## CARRIAGE SHOP

\* \* \* \*

JAMES KENWORTHY

having located in Mendota, is prepared to build to order Carriages and Wagons, out of the best Eastern-seasoned material, on short notice and reasonable terms. Repairing neatly and promptly done. All work guaranteed.

In the summer of 1867 J. Korteck erected a two-story brick building, "fire-proof", to be used as a wagon manufactory and blacksmith shop. As early as 1865 L. Pressure also had a two-story structure on Sixth street for the manufacture of reapers, while Rowland & Adams at the same time and on the same street had a blacksmith shop and plow factory.

By 1872 we had acquired the business of Mark Scott & Company, which, under the management of John C. Pearl, the patentee, was making the Pearl Riding & Walking Cultivator. This same year our old friend, J. Kenworthy, acquired a steam engine for his plant and seems to have branched out from wagon factory to the manufacture of carriages and buggies.

As will be seen, the Tower family and factory played a prominent part in the history of our city for three quarters of a century. No responsible history of our industries could avoid reference to their line of farm machinery. Starting early in the history of the city as a planing mill and sash and door factory, the Tower industry gradually turned to the manufacture of several types of farm machinery, largely invented and developed by members of the family. By the year 1876 they were exhibiting at the Ottawa State Fair their surface cultivator then in production. Their new factory building was erected in 1883. By the turn of the century their establishment covered two city blocks. They made, in addition to their cultivator, a pulverizer and at a later date a burr mill for grinding feed.

## COMBINATION CORN PLOW AND BUGGY

Among the curios of the early days may be mentioned a combination corn plow and buggy, made here in 1871 by Korteck & Linscott. The device was so arranged that either axle could be detached and a set of plows put on. Shortly after this time H. H. Eby invented a cob stacker attachment for corn shellers, a device which was extensively used by large manufacturers for many years.

In 1886 carriages and buggies were being manufactured by Washburne & Scheidenhelm at their plant where the Ford garage is now located; also by Boettcher & Livers in a plant just north of the State theater.

The buggies and carriages of this period were works of art, requiring the services of skilled craftsmen in a number of fields. Made mostly of hickory, with iron work still moderately familiar to many of us, they were often hand carved in decorative features and usually



had about fourteen coats of stain, paint or varnish, rubbed between coats. As a final flourish, these pieces of rolling stock were elaborately striped in blue, red, gold, to suit the tastes and purse of the customer. Around the turn of the century the costs of buggies and carriages was about \$90 to \$110 for singles, with doubles at \$125 to \$135.

## WOOD HORSES FOR MERRY-GO-ROUNDS

The late John Huelzer, wood carver from the old country, and who came over in 1851, has given us some slight claim to immortality as being the town where he originated and carved the first of the thousands of wooden horses which are now standard equipment on merry-go-rounds.

After the turn of the century Edgar Wills here manufactured his Cow Boy Tank Heater, a device to prevent freezing of water for livestock during the winter months.

In 1875 a company was formed with J. D. Tower as president for the manufacture of the Nettler Corn Husker. Later in the same year the Nettler Patent Tile Layer was also made here.

In an article from the Chicago Times, reprinted May 8, 1875, Mendota industries are set forth as follows:

1. Western Cottage Organ Company	100 men
2. Donohue & Madden Foundry	30 men
3. J. D. Tower Planing Mill	
4. Kenworthy, Larks & Co., buggies	} 8 to 25 men each
5. Hawthorne & Washburne, buggies	
6. Dana & Conkey Tannery	
7. Linnscoth, Reck & Co., Flour Mill	
8. Mettler Mfg. Co., Corn Hucker	

For over 50 years the Schaller family has operated the Mendota Manufacturing & Transfer Company. Though primarily engaged in foundry and machine shop work on a custom basis, and in the sale and repair of farm machinery, they have at various times over the years manufactured corn shellers, hay loaders, wind mill regulators and similar specialties. At the present time, and under the same family management, they operate the only fully equipped custom machine shop in the city.

In the seventies, with the advent of bustles and croquet, we got soda pop, the firms of F. Molln & Co., and J. F. Wohlers having had soda water plants here at the time. Ice was got from our ponds. The newspaper of December 13, 1872, reports that the ice dealers were

already harvesting good 12-inch ice. And the same of December 16, 1876 tells us that C. Henning had 20 teams hauling to the ice house that week. Earlier in the same year we learn that C. Henning got a new furnace and copper liquor cooler for his brewery.

Earlier historians have given scant notice to the Henning Brewery. This oversight may, perhaps, be accounted for by a fear of offending the fastidious. It is a solid historical fact, however, that the Henning Brewery was for many years one of the larger employers in the city. Their plant and grain storage facilities covered almost an entire block. As far back as 1877 the annual value of their product was in excess of \$50,000. During or prior to the civil war Diederich Volk started the first brewery to be operated in Mendota. The business was taken over in the 60's by Henning and Grube, later and for many years operated by Henning alone. Their product was sold under the labels, "Go Ahead" and "Export".

During the early period of the business beer was hauled by team six miles to the Village of Troy Grove where it was stored for aging in the silica cave south of the village, said to have been used by the pioneers as a place of retreat during Indian raids on the settlement. Later on the beer was aged in an ice house on the premises here in Mendota. In 1873 Henning built a brick storage house 40' x 50' x 50' high, with hollow walls 40" thick, which were packed with 800 tons of ice. This part of the establishment stood on the alley to the rear of the present apartment house remodeled from a front portion of their main building. Following the disastrous explosion of 1895 the plant was rebuilt and thereafter continued to operate until shortly before World War I when it was liquidated and sold out in bankruptcy.

Cigar making was also a solid local business for many, many years. Although there seems to have been no particular activity in this field during the infancy of Mendota, for the past 75 years we have had from one to as many as three or four cigar factories, often with an aggregate employment of 100 men. It is of particular interest to us moderns that these cigars were mostly the good, 5c variety, which this country still needs.

Tony Bennauer's factory was known as Bookmaker Havana Cigar Manufacturers, "Bookmaker" being the label name of his superior line of 10c and 25c cigars. His 5c lines went under the labels, "Missing Miss", "Teddy Bear", "Hopkin's Choice". Tony says that a journeyman cigar maker averaged about 250 per day, but that the production varied widely even among those skilled in the trade; the stewers got out about 150 in eight hours, while some who did not

appear to be doing anything in a hurry would make as high as 400 in the same length of time. Back in Civil War times Jake Miller had a small factory where Mildred's Grocery is located. In the 1870's Haas & Heeney ran a factory employing 40 to 50 people in two stories at Sohn's present clothing store. Pat Hart at a later date turned out his "Hart's Label" in the building on Main Street still owned by the family.

Henry Stenger and Joseph Weidner, Gross & Kuppel, Rodener Brothers, Swearingen, John Faber, are names significant in the business, while the labels, "Bob Ingersoll", "Iron Cross", "A 10 for 5", "Aunt Tildy" will bring nostalgic memories to many. The last of the cigar makers, Tony retired in 1950. He still stays rather busy at his home making final clearance and settlement with Uncle Sam's excise tax division. Though primarily the victim of cigar-making machines, one gathers that handmade cigars may have been hastened on their way to oblivion by the increasing burden of governmental red tape.

## ANOTHER ORGAN FACTORY

Among our industries of the past which ran afoul of shifting public fancy was the organ business. For over 50 years this city was an important center of manufacture, with the organ factories forming our most important industrial group. C. W. Tewksbury started making melodeons in 1857, annual production two dozen instruments. Somewhat later he was joined by E. B. Carpenter, an organ maker from Vermont. Together they formed Tewksbury, Carpenter & Co. In 1866 they completed their plant, 70 x 30 on Sixth Street, put on a major addition in 1872. Their product was the Western Cottage Organ, famed far and wide throughout the midwest of their times. In 1886 they produced 3,000 organs in eleven attractive styles, and employed over 100 people. For a number of years the annual value of their product exceeded a half million dollars.

When the organ factory passed from the firm of Carpenter and Tewksbury to eastern capitalists who brought their own office force (all unmarried) it was a boon to the social life of Mendota. They, with the home town boys, formed a club known as U. I. O.'s which meaning was unknown. Dancing parties in winter and picnics in summer were organized. To retaliate the girls formed a club known as M. M. M. They did not object to giving out the meaning. The initials stood for "Mendota's Merry Maidens."

The Billhorn organ was also an important local product. It was

a smaller, portable type of instrument, and, strangely enough, is still being made, though not here. Seems that it was used extensively by the army in World War II in their chapels.

And so turns the wheel. The organ, once an indispensable item in all proper homes, has succumbed to the piano, which in turn has been done in by radio and record players, both of which will no doubt be led to the block by television or by more advanced technologies of the future.

## INDUSTRIES THAT WE LOST

The municipal historian views industries which are dead and gone with much the same feeling that parents contemplate a death among their children. And the more recent the loss the more poignant the mood. Why did we lose it? What could we have done to prevent it? Within the past ten or twelve years we have lost two industries which were vital to this community: J. D. Tower & Sons Company and Sampsel Time Control, Inc. Hindsight, which is immeasurably superior to Foresight, tells us that we probably could have saved them both.

For almost 75 years the J. D. Tower and Sons Company had been a bulwark in this community. Through depression and panic, good times and poor times, despite the loss of one of the founders and four of his children, two of whom were active in the business, within a period of a few weeks during the flu epidemic of 1918, this family maintained its company as one of the big three of our local industries. Its main product was the Tower Cultivator, the original surface cultivator now employed so widely in the cultivation of our crops. Through this cultivator and the allied lines of farm machinery the Towers spread the name of Mendota far and wide through the land, gave the town a welcome industrial payroll and made a profit for themselves.

But this profit was small during and after the depression years of the early thirties. Hence it came to pass that an outsider was brought in early in the forties to put the company on its feet. This newcomer's ideas were not too unsound, had he been blessed with a reasonably unlimited amount of cash in the company till, in default of which he managed shortly to steer the company into the bankruptcy courts, from which it did not emerge as a going concern. An active board of directors composed of local bankers and industrialists fully aware of the financial facts of life might have kept the concern on its course.



We lost Sampsel, who invented and makes the time controls which stop and start your furnace, because Mendota did not do that which was essential to keep him and his company. Mr. Sampsel apparently did not want to move. This was his home. Most of his employees lived here, being approximately 100 in number. But his growing business demanded more ample quarters. The neighboring community of Spring Valley got its business men and civic leaders together and made a proposal which Mendota did not meet. We now view with regret his large and repeatedly expanded plant in our neighboring city, where he employs upward of 550 people. This payroll might have been ours.

As was the case with the Mother Hubbard Washboard, most of the industrial activity of the past has gone its way by reason of obsolescence. Some of it, as with the organ, fell victim to changing tastes. A part served its vital place during a particular portion of our history, to dwindle and die because it had largely exhausted its market. Some met with physical disaster.

After the turn of the century and continuing into the nineteen twenties, Will Hubbard founder of the Mother Hubbard Company manufactured in Mendota the Mother Hubbard Washboard a mechanical board with right and left hand threads which worked similarly to rubbing clothes between the hands. Their plant, back of Anderson's Bakery, employed four or five men, with sales being made by house to house canvass. Fred Henning and Pete Weber were for a time associated with the company whose product enjoyed a considerable sale until the advent of the electric washing machine.

## BLACK BROTHERS OLDEST INDUSTRY

The distinction of being Mendota's oldest manufacturing concern is accorded The Black Brothers Co. This company was organized in Chicago in 1882 by Walter, John and William Black to manufacture sanding machinery for the wood working industry. In that branch of the business they perfected and added greatly to the equipment then being offered.

In 1901 they moved their business to Mendota and erected a factory building adjoining the old Donohue & Madden foundry, which was located on the land now occupied by the Kroger store. The Black factory stood on the space now being used for auto parking south of the store. This building and part of the foundry served as their plant until 1907 when the brothers acquired the property on South Ninth

avenue, to where part of the original factory building was moved. A portion of this building was used for office purposes. The remainder and a new brick structure, supplementing it, served as factory space.

The elder Black Brothers have long since passed on. John E. Black and Robert S. Black, sons of John Black, Sr., took over the assets of the parent company after the first World War and after their honorable discharge from the U. S. armed forces, where John served as lieutenant with the 172nd Aero Squadron, A.E.F., and Robert as lieutenant with the 54th Heavy Artillery, A.E.F. They formed the present corporation known as "The Black Brothers Co., Inc." in 1920. Under their direction the business enjoyed a steady growth. During the years, veneers and plywoods, through their ramifications, became one of the most important branches of the woodworking industry.

While sanding machines still play a part in wood finishing, the more important branch of the industry depends upon machinery to perfect these wood laminations. The evolution from sanding equipment to machines for spreading adhesives and for the clamps and presses to firmly bind the lamina together was a natural thing for the Black Brothers. They gradually discontinued making sanding equipment after perfecting a roller coating machine for spreading adhesives and for other coating purposes; apparatus for preparing adhesives; presses for plywoods and veneers; clamps and other devices used in furniture making—in fact, machinery of any type or kind of manufacturing process that works in wood or combines metals, plastics or countless other materials with wood in their finished state. Few people realize that manufacturers of pianos, parts of automobiles, Masonite, Celotex, cardboard packing boxes, insulation, butcher blocks, bowling pins—in other words, just think of anything that is glued and molded together in its manufacturing and you have found users of Black's machinery.

The factory employs approximately 80 people, thus playing an important role in community life. Machines that these Mendota citizens make carry the name of "The World's Greatest Little City" all over the civilized and not-so civilized world. Into Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran, Israel, Finland, Japan, China, all of Europe, parts of Africa, Australia and New Zealand—as England used to be able to say, now Mendota can truthfully paraphrase, "The Sun never sets on Mendota as its name goes around the world on Black's plywood machinery." The bulk of the domestic sales of the output of the factory is handled in most part through distributors or manufacturers' agents numbering several hundred in the United States and Canada. The contacts in for-

eign countries are made through large exporting concerns who maintain sales representatives in all parts of the world.

In the present world crisis, as during world wars, Black Bros. machines are used extensively both here and abroad in factories employed on government contracts for defense purposes.

\* \* \*

Under the management of John E. Black and Robert S. Black the company made rapid progress. In the mid 1940's the factory was completely retooled with equipment which permitted the increased volume to be handled with greater facility. This retooling continued until today the factory is recognized as having the most modern and finely tooled machine shops to be found in any factory comparable in size.

In 1950 the need for additional space, necessitated the planning of the new office building which was completed and ready for occupancy in December, 1951. The interior of these modern office quarters is uniquely beautiful. Because of the relationship existing between Blacks and the woodworking industry, it was a natural thing for them to finish the interior with materials in which Black's machinery had an important role in the making. Five examples of beautiful veneers are represented in the plywood panels, which were used in the interior, ranging from the less expensive though good looking, Douglas Fir, to imported Philippine Mahogany, South American Korina, Domestic White Oak and Black Walnut. These large panels 3 feet wide by 10 feet in length were especially fabricated for the office. Matching flush doors are used throughout the interior, along with a hard maple flooring. The ceiling is of modern acoustical tile.

\* \* \*

John E. Black, the former president of the corporation and one who is remembered with respect, by all who knew him, passed on in February, 1951. Robert S. Black assumed the position vacated by his brother, and upon him devolved the active management of the company. He is aided very competently by James S. Carroll, as vice-president and assistant manager, and other faithful employees who have been with the company for many years.

The latest phase of the development of this company is being written, as the old original portion of the factory, which was a landmark in 1901, is being torn down to make way for a modern harmonizing addition to the plant.

## H. D. CONKEY & CO. ESTABLISHED 1907

PARALLELING THE GROWTH of Mendota during the past 50 years has been the growth of H. D. Conkey & Company. Back in 1907, shortly after college, H. D. Conkey forsook the farm management and grain elevator business career of his father and started a wholesale coal business under the name of H. D. Conkey Coal Company.

The coal business was a winter business and to continue serving the dealer organization, one of the first sand and gravel washing and screening plants was put into operation at Yorkville, Illinois, in 1910. Other plants were started at Moronts, Sheridan, Oregon, and in 1925 one of the most modern washing plants in the country was put into operation at Aurora. These plants contributed largely to the Illinois good roads program and to building construction in Illinois. This latter plant is still in operation.

In 1939 a large modern brick plant was purchased at Lowell, Illinois. Production here is confined to the manufacture of high grade face brick in unusual shades of gray and pastel colors. To still further meet the needs of the ever-expanding dealer organization the company in 1949 purchased a limestone quarry near Lannon, Wisconsin. The Lannon stone from this quarry is used by Northwestern University for their buildings and for thousands of schools, churches and dwellings in the middle west. Deposits of this high grade stone are ample for several generations. Crab Orchard and other types of architectural stone are made available to architects and builders through national sales contracts with the producers.

Thus has risen the building materials business started and still controlled by H. D. Conkey. Aiding him in the development from the early days, were J. P. Gallagher, who serves as secretary-treasurer; O. J. Ellingen, who was one of the vice presidents until his untimely death in 1951; and W. G. Van Etten, who still serves as vice president and sales manager of the manufacturing division. A son, R. W. Conkey, joined the firm in 1924 and is now executive vice president.

World War I in 1917 limited coal markets and reduced the demand for gravel, except for wartime construction. The company acted as brokers to secure war sub-contracts for a small local factory. From this beginning grew the Conco Engineering Works, housed for a number of years in a remodeled livery barn at the north edge of Mendota's business district. Light cranes and contractors' equipment were produced in this plant until it was destroyed by fire in July, 1925. The manufacturing plant had been developing rapidly under the leadership of R. W. Conkey since his graduation from college in 1924, and the firm was in no mood to quit. Plans to rebuild were started im-



mediately and on January 1, 1926 the operations were moved to the new and modern plant at the south edge of Mendota.

Almost immediately it was evident that the new building was too small. The overhead crane and hoist business grew by leaps and bounds. A locomotive crane business from Champaign, Illinois was annexed. Other items were developed and production increased until the 1929 depression struck. By 1930 the demand for cranes and heavy equipment had stopped completely, few roads were being built, and building construction was at a standstill. Again the company started looking for other work to take the place of that halted by the depression.

In 1930 a printing plant in Mendota, which had been in operation for many years, was in financial difficulty, but orders were still coming in. This plant was purchased and the Conco Press came into being. New equipment was purchased, men skilled in printing were brought to Mendota, and an extremely high grade of publishing and advertising printing was produced. The Press continued to grow and was operated by H. D. Conkey & Company until shortly before World War II when it was sold to Kenneth B. Butler, the plant manager, and a group of his associates.

\* \* \*

The manufacturing plant was not entirely idled by the depression, although the entire working force at one time was down to a mere handful of people. The company decided to enter the manufacture of ice cream freezers and production started early in 1933. This line of household equipment met with immediate favor and soon the entire pre-depression working force was back on the payroll with a sizable increase in total employment.

In 1935 the company started the production of a complete line of domestic, industrial and commercial stokers, followed shortly by the addition of a line of oil burners, oil-fired furnaces, Field barometric draft controls and other items of heating equipment. All of this required more buildings, more engineering talent, more personnel of all types. Mass production methods were set up in many departments. New buildings were built at the rate of one a year, and in 1937 the executive and sales offices were moved from the crowded upstairs quarters downtown, to new and modern offices adjoining the plant, or to a newly constructed laboratory and engineering building.

World War II had not yet started when the attention of officials in Washington was called to the facilities and personnel available in the Conco Engineering Works plant. The Marine Corps placed an

order for pioneer work to be done on a five-gallon steel container to store and transport gasoline and other liquids for the expanding services. From that first work done in 1939 there was developed a container which was produced in this plant almost without interruption, for almost 15 years.

The can production which was started first in Mendota provided the armed forces with the first satisfactory container. The production line that was set up, the special seaming and welding machines that were designed and built by Conco, were duplicated by numerous other plants set up in the United States, in England, in Egypt and Arabia. Conco-trained personnel were sent overseas to supervise the construction and operation of these plants. Near the close of the war Conco was called upon to design and produce the first all-aluminum can for the Marine Corps.

Conco's war work was not limited to five-gallon containers. Conco cranes were produced around the clock for war plants and bases all over the world. Conco was first to answer the call for production of an all-steel powder container for 155 mm. shells, getting into full production in less than six weeks time. Conco employment rose to over 800. The plant was in operation 24 hours a day. A substation, larger than that required by the rest of the City of Mendota, was built to supply electricity to the plant. Conco was, and still is, the largest user of water pumped by the City of Mendota.

The cessation of hostilities found the company ready to return to civilian production. The aluminum container was still to be produced. Cranes and hoists were in great demand for plants returning to civilian production. Oil and gas burners and furnaces replaced stokers and modern production lines were set up to produce them in large quantities. Conco was a pioneer in the development of a satisfactory counterflow furnace for the perimeter type of heating, which is now recognized as the most satisfactory type of heating plant for the modern, low-cost, slab or ground type of homes.

## PRINTERS OF MAGAZINES

A most successful newcomer is The Wayside Press. It is not newly arrived in point of time, but is just now over the horizon in terms of payroll, product and progress. Its predecessors in unbroken chain go back to 1892 when, under the sponsorship of the Western Advent Christian Publishing association, it was organized and began printing religious literature under the name of Our Hope Press, an

adaptation of the title of its original publication, "Our Hope and Life in Christ". This concern moved over the years from one location to another within the city, under the aegis of a series of managers among whom were Roger A. Watkins who, during the World War I period, installed there the first Linotype composing machine in the city.

Rev. Fim Murra came in as manager in 1919, remaining here until the depression years. It was he who promoted and built the present modern plant on Washington road in 1927. Reverend Murra was active in all civic affairs, having been one of the charter members of our Kiwanis Club which he served as secretary for a number of years.

Our Hope Press was bought by H. D. Conkey Company in 1930. Operations were continued under the management of their W. G. Van Etten and W. F. Colson, the name being changed to Conco Press. In 1931 Kenneth B. Butler, a former editor of the Mendota Sun-Bulletin, came into the organization. At about the same time the company secured the first of its publication contracts which started it on a period of expansion which continues to this day.

In 1941 the Conco Press was bought by Mr. Butler and a group of associates, renamed The Wayside Press. Under their management it has prospered exceedingly. The number of employees has increased from 15 in 1931 to in excess of 200 today, including affiliated enterprises. They print and mail out 35 magazines and periodicals among which are P. E. O. Record, Pythian Sister Tidings, International Rebekah, International Altrusan, Illinois Medical Journal, Agricultural Leaders Digest, American Artisan, Heating, Piping and Air Conditioning, Industrial Marketing, Hospital Management, Chemical Processing, Food Processing, Production Engineering and Management, and many others. These publications mailed through our local post office account for 70% of its revenue and are given credit for promoting it to first-class rating. Largely as a result of Wayside Press business the Mendota Post Office in 1952 had receipts greater than any other post office in the county.

Associated to a degree with the printing establishment are advertising and public relations services, Kenneth B. Butler & Associates, with modern offices just across the highway from the plant. James E. Gallagher is executive director. The various activities also have offices in Chicago where Mr. Butler spends part of his time, lecturing during the winter months at Northwestern University Medill School of Journalism.

Butler Typo-Design Research Center publishes handbooks on magazine typography and counsels dozens of prominent national magazines on problems of layout and typography. George Likeness is executive director.

## H. D. HUME COMES TO MENDOTA

The largest manufacturer of farm implements, a personable fellow by the name of Horace D. Hume, came here about 15 years ago with a bit of capital and a head full of ideas.

The beginning of the H. D. Hume company goes back to the year 1929. The founders, Mr. and Mrs. Hume, were operating an automobile agency and garage, selling farm machinery as a side line. This business was located among the hills of Washington in the rich farming community of Garfield, where in addition to wheat, seed peas had become a very profitable crop.

It was at this time the threshers were on their way out, and combines were becoming the popular method of harvesting. In his implement business Mr. Hume met a great deal of sales resistance to the combine as this machine did not cut close enough to the ground to harvest the ripe peas.

He talked this problem over with a farmer friend, J. E. Love, to whom he had sold a combine, and together they invented the floating cutter bar, an accessory to the combine for the harvest of peas.

Knowing that many farmers would want this type of equipment, Mr. Hume and Mr. Love pooled their interests and formed the Hume-Love company, starting operation in a small plant at Garfield, Washington in 1931. Although the country was feeling the depression, these two men worked long hours both in building this cutter bar and in assisting their customers in the installation and making the proper adjustments to the combines.

They soon found that they needed a different type of reel on the combine in order to make their cutter bar work more efficiently. Late in 1932 they hit upon the tined-finger idea and action-bat reel. This reel found immediate favor among the farmers, not only in the harvesting of peas, but also in the harvesting of wheat, as it would pick up and save their grain no matter how badly lodged or twisted the crop was.

The canners of green peas in the adjoining territory saw the improvements which this small but progressive company had made in the harvesting of grain, and they inquired if something could be done about the green pea harvest. True to their inventive ability, Mr. Hume and Mr. Love fitted up a special windrow harvester and made a successful demonstration in the green pea harvest at Dayton, Washington in 1933.

In the fall of that same year Mr. Hume traveled East to Champaign, Illinois, where with the aid of an implement dealer, he demonstrated the cutter bar and reel in that great soybean-growing area.



The demand became so great for this equipment that on July 10, 1935 the founders incorporated the business and added more producing capacity.

Problems continued to be brought to these inventors and they were adequately solved. The "Mitchell No. 1" and "No. 2" Lifter Guards were produced in 1936, The "Pickup-Loader" and "TractoR-Rower" in 1937.

In 1939 the Minnesota Valley Canning Company of Le Sueur, Minnesota, bought the first TractoR-Rower for the Midwest. Mr. Hume spent considerable time that year acquainting them with the operation of this machine. He also traveled extensively in the soybean territory introducing the Hume-Love Reel.

By 1940 so much business was coming from the Midwest that Mr. Hume decided to establish a branch plant there. The Hume family traveled with a house trailer, living for a time at one place and another looking for a suitable location. When they arrived in Mendota they soon decided that their quest was over — "The World's Greatest Little City" was the place for their factory branch.

A building was rented on Main Street and the original crew of *three* began operation on January 1, 1941. At first the work was mainly assembling the parts which were produced in the Garfield plant. Soon the company bought the rented building and the adjoining building, and production was commenced.

As the two regions where the plants were operating had so many dissimilar problems, and it was difficult to operate both with the management personnel available, the two original partners and principal stockholders decided to separate. So at the close of the year 1943, Mr. Love bought the Garfield plant and Mr. Hume the Mendota plant. They agreed to operate under the patents obtained previous to the separation, but otherwise were entirely separate. Thence the H. D. Hume Company was born.

\* \* \*

Mr. Hume's obsessing idea was to produce a TractoR-Rower which had a universal frame to fit all tractors. This was realized in 1944. In 1945 the first experimental Cut-Lode was produced. This machine cut the crop and loaded in one operation, and being used for cutting spinach, has become a popular item in the production of baby food.

In 1946 a pull-type loader was added to the production line. This completed the now famous *Hume Two-Stage Method* of Green Crop Harvesting. All this time the company was showing a steady increase, adding more floor space and more employees. In 1950 the Hydro-

Rigid Disk Frame went into production, and in 1951 production on the Perfo Crop Guard began.

In 1952 the Company added to its list of products, the Hume Wire Winder, which is manufactured by another Mendota firm.

The first foreign order was received from Africa in 1935. Since then the H. D. Hume Company has made shipments to over 40 different countries in all parts of the world. Incidentally they are still shipping to the first foreign customer, J. P. Frendo, Casablanca, Morocco, Africa.

At the present time, the H. D. Hume company has approximately 100 employees and are using 130,000 sq. ft. of floor space. Constant improvements in product manufacturing is creating the possibility of wider use, resulting in increasing employment and growing sales opportunities.

## INDUSTRIES LINKED TO AGRICULTURE

Our smallest business making things for the farmer is the Wire Winder concern, where its owner and proprietor, Paul A. Schmidt and his son, Ira, build an attachment for farm tractors which takes much of the drudgery out of the job of stringing the miles and miles of barb-wire fences which surround and divide our farms. Where fencing is to be removed, a frequent need in a farming community, their device can be used in re-winding the wire on the original spool or drum.

In Triumph suburb, Ray Kreiser, in his wholly owned Speedmill Manufacturing company, makes a fine line of portable burr mills for grinding feed. Mounted on rubber tired wheels they can be moved over the highway at maximum speed attached to a car or pickup. In operation they are driven by power take-off from any of the conventional makes of tractor. Ray also makes a line of portable spiral conveyors in lengths up to 40 feet, used for hoisting corn and feed into overhead storage bins. His daughter, Eileen, manages the office, while Mrs. Kreiser accompanies her husband in their house trailer when they show their line of machinery each year at the surrounding county and state fairs. The uninitiated might wonder why it is that corn must be ground. True, cattle and hogs are equipped with pretty good teeth, which served their purpose with the old-style open-pollinated corn. But this hybrid corn, now universally planted through the middle west, and which has many superior qualities, is so hard that livestock can't chew it unless it first be broken up in a grinder. As usual, the rose has its thorn.

One of our local industries has just about solved the problem inso-

far as it relates to storage, on the farm, of corn, beans and small grain. Early in the thirties Henry C. Rose and Duane Miller came here with their Illinois Concrete Crib company, an infant industry engaged in the manufacture of concrete building blocks and a special concrete stave, or ventilated slab, used in the construction of their concrete corn cribs. They and their company have prospered over the years. Their plant and office help, with erection crews, numbers about 30. The countryside is pretty well spotted with their cribs. They are so thoroughly mechanized that loading and unloading of ear corn, shelling and grinding can be done with the press of a button. Often one of these cribs makes it possible for a large feeder to dispense with the services of two or three men, thus enabling him to gain back his capital investment over a short period of years.

Richard Phalen and his Mendota Building Service have also been quite active in recent years in supplying our farms with temporary metal cribs and with Quonset and Butler type machine sheds.

We lavish unlimited time and attention to the care and feeding of farm animals. The prize-class poultry and livestock on our modern farms would not admit kinship with the scrawny creatures of 100 years ago. This change is no accident. Breeding accounts for much of the difference, but diet and the preparation of special feeds have perhaps done more than any other factors within recent years in the promotion of the well being of our farm animal population. The business of preparing, combining and making special feeds, not only for different species, but for various and specific ends and purposes, has become a major industry nationally and locally as well. Time was when chicken feed was chicken feed and they were lucky to get it. Mostly they got table scraps. But not anymore. First there must be varieties of chick starter mash, a sort of poultry pabulum. Then they go up the ladder to the feeds prepared to suit their special end in life. This they must eat to be broilers, this to be fryers, this if they want to be stewing hens. While if eggs be the goal, they get something different yet. So it goes throughout the farm animal kingdom.

## A MODERN FEED MILL

Fifty-two employees at our feed mill, which was built several years ago by the Illinois Farm Supply company, keep busy around the clock making a complete line of swine, poultry and cattle feeds which they ship out at the rate of 5,000 bags a day — not paper bags but 100

pound bags. Their fleet of trucks puts on a million miles a year delivering their output to 50 central and northern Illinois counties. This firm is owned cooperatively by Illinois Farm Bureau members. Their feeds contain approximately 40 different ingredients, such as ground corn, ground oats, soy bean meal, cottonseed meal, vitamin "A", vitamin "B", antibiotics and this and that, all as formulated by acknowledged animal and poultry nutritionists. Their sources extend from this country to Australia, Argentina and Germany.

Fasco Mills, owned and operated by Arthur Zimmerman in the suburb of Welland, puts out a highly successful and widely recommended line of feeds, as do also a number of our local and surrounding grain elevators.

In the normal course of events our hogs and cattle grow, thrive and go to their rendezvous with Messrs. Swift and Armour. This is not necessarily the course. Age and accident take their toll among domestic animals as well as their owners. Lightning continues to strike. Disease is an ogre never quite conquered or understood. The animals cannot talk. We, with our veterinaries in attendance, must therefore do the best we can. But no sooner do we get Brucellosis pretty well under control than up jumps Vascular Exanthema about which no one knows anything. Lord help us, we don't even know how to pronounce it. But a man can't quit. And so it is that our farmers continue to pour out their time and their dollars in a continuing gamble that sooner or later our men of science will learn how to control each new evil. Yet in the struggle thousands of animals and millions of dollars annually are lost. Even with the help of our veterinarians, who are highly skilled in their profession, and with the aid of serums, vaccines, and tests without number, and despite the insight given by thousands of post mortems, it is not too unusual for a farmer to lose 300 sheep or 500 pigs or a dozen prime steers within the space of a few days or weeks, never knowing the cause.

Scientists and specialists in city water supplies tell us that the first requirement for drinking water is that it be potable. It should taste good, be pleasing to the palate. An obvious parallel may be found in the prerequisites for standard farm atmosphere. The countryside should smell good. It should have the traditional and expected aromas of clover and new mown hay, not that of carrion.

Thus it is that a rendering works or disposal service, ever on call, is an essential adjunct to our farming operations. Within our immediate vicinity somewhere around 20,000 animals each year go, not to the packing house, but to the disposal industry. Many are cared for by Jerome Sondgeroth at his plant just east of the city. The serv-



ice in this business is so efficient that a high degree of economic salvage is possible. Wool, hides, tallow and other products are secured, while the residue, known as tankage, is an important source of protein supplement.

In the field of processing, our local efforts are somewhat less diversified than one might wish. They evidence, nevertheless, a definite trend in such particular. Though not widely or, perhaps, properly famed as a center of production for milk and eggs, the aggregate effect on our local industrial payroll is significant.

\* \* \*

The Great Atlantic and Pacific Tea Company (A. & P. to you) employs a force of 41 who candle  $3\frac{1}{2}$  to 4 million dozen eggs each year, approximately  $\frac{1}{3}$  of which come from our own territory.

Jack Costello's local creamery is supplied by milk routes through this area which bring into his plant 50,000 pounds of milk a day. 80,000 pounds of cottage cheese is produced weekly. Ten people are employed.

While one would hardly consider walnut trees to be a crop, still there are a few in almost every woodlot and along our creeks and branches. By travelling many thousands of miles each year George Van Meter and his associates in the Mendota Saw Mill Company, contrive to fell, collect, saw, steam and ship out an impressive total of a half million board feet per year of walnut lumber. About 15% goes into furniture, the remainder being used in gunstocks.

Among our thriving industries arrived within recent years is our Mendota Trouser Company, brought here about a dozen years ago by the Lauters, father, lamentably deceased only a short time past, and his boys, Jerry, Dan and Harold, who are carrying on the business of making a fine line of men's slacks, sportswear, top coats. They employ 65 people at their modern plant, which turns out 100,000 to 125,000 pairs of slacks, annually, with other products in proportion.

## CALPACK COMES TO MENDOTA

About 1949 the California Packing Corporation, Del Monte brand, built their modern and efficient packing plant just east of town. It is said to be the most up-to-date plant of its type in the land. At present they process green peas, sweet corn and lima beans, though it is said that their over-all plan provides for future addition of an asparagus

line and a tomato line. They lease approximately 10,000 acres of surrounding farm land, which they operate with their own help, who, in the winter season, are kept busy feeding pea vines and silage to thousands of feeder cattle, bought by the company each year to consume that which is left from their packing operations. Local employees vary in number from 150 to 1,150, depending on the season. The plant has a capacity of 30,000 cases a day, each case containing 24 No. 10, 8 oz. or No. 303 cans.

Every operation and process in this organization places emphasis on labor-saving machinery, on the one hand, and a quality product on the other. Sweet corn is now picked with mechanical pickers, a modification of those familiar for years in the harvesting of field corn. Peas and lima beans are mowed by a reel machine, manufactured without exception we hope by our Mr. Hume, after which they are hauled, vine and all, in hay racks to a battery of weird machines resembling enormous ice cream freezers lying on their sides and raised about ten feet in the air. There the vines, with pods attached, are fed into the mouth of these contraptions, called "viners", through which the vines are rotated, paddled, and spanked to such an extent that they are forced to give up every pea and lima bean, emerging and being stacked at the nether end as winter forage for the feeder cattle.

The lovely peas and limas fall into boxes in the bottom of the machine from which they are taken to the packing plant. It is estimated that the over-all time from mowing of the vine to final sealing in the can rarely takes longer than two hours. To the home gardener, accustomed to picking and shucking a few bushels of peas and limas each season the hard way, the spectacle of one of these ultra-modern viners in action is most depressing. Here the finished product rolls out wholesale without a lame back or a sore thumb in the entire organization.

It is not hard to see that this company and its payroll mean a lot to Mendota. Our more significant gain in the long run, however, is and will continue to be by reason of the high calibre of their personnel. Calpack, as it is known for short, has brought in men and women who have taken their place in all community activities, who not only work here, but live here, having adopted us as we have adopted them.

\* \* \*

The infant of the group Heppner Mfg. Co., Mendota Division, has brought to our town within the past six months a business which makes radio and television parts, mainly transformers and coils. It is

run by Myron Heppner who at present commutes by plane from Round Lake, but who plans to move his family here in the near future. An anticipated employment of 100 and the nature of their product makes them a welcome addition to our group of industrialists. They are presently located in the Kakusha Park Pavilion, which they have leased and extensively remodeled.





## HOW'S BUSINESS?

**N**OT THE LEAST UNIQUE of the many businesses which have flourished or languished in Mendota was the old Chinese laundry run by two Chinese gentlemen in an old wooden building on Illinois avenue next door to the Fitch laundry.

These Chinese carried on in a quiet way, with bundles going in and coming out. Laundry slips were written with fascinating Chinese characters done by brush on little colored slips.

Not many businesses can boast the patronization of a competitor's family, but the two Chinese proprietors often played host to the small daughter of the laundry owner next door. Little Faith Fitch many times visited the competing laundry to get soda crackers, much against her parents' wishes.

The Chinese left about the time of the depression, but Fitch's laundry, now co-owned by Faith and her husband, Arden Campbell, is still very much a part of Mendota. The firm began in 1909 in the spot where Hall's clothing store is now located. D. A. Fitch, Mrs. Campbell's father, started the laundry and operated it until he died in 1943, when the Campbells took over. Spring rains bring to mind the early horse and buggy days of the laundry when the delivery wagon, loaded with freshly laundered clothes, often bogged down in the muddy roads.

Business houses have always been a mark of the progressiveness of a town. In the early days the business houses were on the East

side and grouped about the railroad depot, spreading gradually from Sixth street and Main street to Washington, Illinois, and Jefferson.

Cities used to inventory their business places and Mendota in 1870 boasted of five hotels, two or three public halls, two grist mills, four grain warehouses, two nurseries, two cheese factories, two newspapers, three restaurants, three agricultural implement dealers, five barber shops, seven blacksmith shops, four butchers, twelve boots and shoes, four carriage factories, two cigar manufacturers, and nine clothiers.

Twelve groceries supplied the foodstuffs, and four stores carried hardware while five sold stoves and tinware. There was a hoopskirt and corset factory . . . even a vinegar works.

Strictly a horse and buggy era business was that of the harness maker. The Schmitz brothers, John and Bertram, harnessed the town's horses from 1855-58, were out of business during the war, and set up shop again in 1867. John carried on alone after '76 and two years later joined a man named Reiter to carry on the trade. George F. Kidd was a post-war competitor.

A city directory was published in 1903 by a Princeton firm. Nothing ever published contained more typographical errors than this one . . . it positively murdered the spelling of names of most of our citizens. It shows that among our business houses of 50 years ago were Potter Brothers dry goods store (succeeded later by Parks Dry Goods Co.) and another enterprising dry goods merchant, T. F. Brett.

Photographers were R. J. Dean, G. M. Crusius, and G. J. Keller. Rudolph Witte was a tailor, as were Fred Mueller (still going, 62 years in business) and Otto F. Shide. Fred Wershinski handled ladies ready to wear. His business was succeeded by the Della Allen Shop, operated by Della Wershinski Allen and Robert Allen, a flourishing business in the 20's.

James A. Dubbs operated the Warner House, now the Ellis Hotel, and he also managed the Germania Opera House. Hoffman and Wittgan were tinsmiths, a firm succeeded by Fred and John Wittgan, a firm still in existence under the Wittgan name. Ed Heiman operated a newsstand. J. M. Momeny was a real estate agent.

As automobiles replaced horse and buggy, oil stations sprang up. One of the oldest stations still in operation is the Central Oil Co. on Jefferson street and Illinois avenue. Its ownership passed from E. E. Holliston (who opened it in 1922) to O. C. Weitzel (1925) to its present owners, Harold Sonntag and Leo Hochstatter, in 1937.

Dorsey C. Andress, James Clarkson, and John Hartan dispensed coal to townsmen before 1900. In 1910 George Feik began to sell coal in a building somewhat south of the Feik Fuel company's present

building (opened in 1913) on Main street. His son, Elmer, began working for him in 1911, and became a partner in 1916. Those were horse and buggy days for the coal dealers, too, and when the Feik barn burned and three of the four horses were killed, the loss was not only financial, but also sentimental. The firm became the Feik Fuel company in 1920 when the father died and Elmer became the owner.

Clinite's Wallpaper and Paint Store, one of the oldest businesses in town which has retained the same name through the years, opened on the site of the present post office in 1899 by S. W. and A. B. Clinite. The latter has been the owner since his brother's death in 1943.

## BOOTS AND SHOES

Today we use the phrase, "Baby needs shoes," but 50 to 100 years ago the folks shopped for "boots and shoes." Two early boot and shoe tradesmen were Jacob Fritz (1857) and William F. Pitstick (co-owner of the Pitstick & Harbaugh Boot & Shoe Shop beginning in 1879). Rudolf Holdenrid who today operates his shoe store on Jefferson street, came from Germany in 1923 to repair shoes for the Huss & Bush Boot & Shoe store. Two years later he began his own business in the basement of the Faber hotel. Mrs. Holdenrid recalls the many times in those early years when she and her husband who were only beginning to understand English, coaxed each other to wait on customers because each was afraid he couldn't understand the customer. In 1935 Holdenrid bought the building in which he is now located, and in 1938 bought out his former employer to include the sale of shoes in his business. A four-day sale of 13,000 pairs of shoes marked the beginning of his shoe store. Fritz Shoe store and later Fritz and Hessenberger was another old shoe store. Henry Stenger ran a shoe store for many years.

Although there is no connection between the sale of jewelry and shoes unless it is that both can be termed accessories, Jacob Kohl, one of Mendota's earliest jewelers, always operated his store in the same building with a shoe store. In 1860 when Kohl came here from Germany, he opened his shop with the shoe dealer, Higgins, on Washington street. Many pieces of silver used in Mendota homes today were bought in the old Kohl store. Later the jeweler moved to Main street, in the same store with Huss & Bush. The sale of silver, especially silver service sets, and wine goblets and even cups and saucers, often for large silver wedding anniversary celebrations was a large part of

his business. As a sideline, he pierced many a dainty ear for young ladies who at 18 could probably be given the customary diamond earrings.

Munson jewelers was another landmark for many years. A brass plate still adorns the sidewalk on Washington near Main.

Time was when a body could get himself fitted out from head to toe and get his groceries, too—all at the same place, the old-fashioned general store. Philip Erlenborn in 1858 advertised “hardware, groceries, crockery, window glass, etc,” in his general store. His son-in-law, Charles John, followed in Erlenborn’s professional footsteps in 1866 with his own general store. Samuel Fernberg, a German by birth, who had travelled West as a peddler with his wares on his back, opened a general store in 1856. His son-in-law, Freedman, and later his grandson operated the business almost until the turn of the century. One of the earliest settlers, Franz Meisenbach, displayed boots and shoes, groceries and clothing beginning in 1853 and later started the first German paper in LaSalle county, the Mendota Democrat.

One of the early dry goods stores was run by William and George Black—another by William and Tom Scott, brothers of Robert Scott who founded the store of Carson, Pirie, Scott and Company in Chicago. Mrs. Mary R. Woods Lawrence tells of standing on a counter in the Black store and reciting “the old speckled hen” before an audience of clerks and shoppers. A new fad, the hoop skirt, was just being displayed, and it was given to her as a reward.

## THE START OF “THE KITCH”

Way back in the post-war period Mendotans were satisfying their sweet tooth at the local confectionery. Ed. F. Higgins ran a sweet shop then and sold books, stationery, and cigars as well. The “Kitch” now serves as a popular confectionery. The Candy Kitchen, its full name, opened in 1911 under the management of Stasinis, and Theodore Troupis (the latter became sole owner in 1916). Always a high school hangout, the Kitch was the first store in Mendota to keep ice cream in both winter and summer. Many mothers and fathers who once worked for or bought from Troupis as high school youths, now have daughters and sons working for him or occupying his booths as customers. Although the store still features ice cream and candy made there, the ice cream is now made from a mix. Other confectionery and ice cream parlor operators in earlier days were K. W. Pohl and also Carl Yost.

Pumpnickel bread so famous that it was once shipped periodically as far as Denver, Colo., was baked by the Zapf bakery. Such



favorite dishes as homemade ice cream made of pure cream, vegetable soup, Sunday chicken dinners, and Christmas fruit cakes attracted many townsmen as well as railroad workers to the restaurant-bakery. The firm's history can be traced back to 1895 when Henry Mauer bought out N. Knauer. In 1909 Henry Zapf became Mauer's partner, and in 1922 Mauer sold his interest to Emil Bauer. From 1923 Zapf operated it until he sold out to Gromann's in 1941. The bakery was called Mauer & Zapf from 1909-1941, despite the ownership changes.

Gabriel Pohl, Daniel Harbaugh, and Casper Fischer were among the early Mendota grocers. Pohl's store, purchased the lot on Main and Jefferson streets for \$150 before the Civil war. He later ran a boarding house and saloon and had the first livery stable in Mendota. In 1914 George W. Elsesser and George Roth opened the R & E Grocery at 727 Washington street (these grocers had previously worked for their relatives in the Elsesser & Roth Grocery for many years). Elsesser's son, Albert, began working in his father's store about 1920 and upon the father's death in 1925 took over his share of the business. The grocery's old pot-bellied stove promoted the present location of Elsesser's Grocery in 1935 when the building's owner refused to install a furnace. Three years later Elsesser bought out Roth. The grocery business used to be a 75 percent credit and delivery proposition, while now it's largely cash and carry. The whole winter supply of potatoes and flour was at one time bought in fall; potatoes are now stocked twice weekly. Most items were sold in bulk form and coffee was ground as it was sold, whereas now most goods are ready-prepared. Not everything has changed, however, for the same cash register, over 40 years old, and the same scale, about half a century old, once used in the R & E store are now used in the Elsesser Grocery. ("It's never been out of whack since I've known it," Elsesser says.)

\* \* \*

The first agricultural implement companies were established by Louis Eckert (1865), George A. Kellenberger (1860), and Ebenezer Winslow (1857). Winslow was also one of the first singing school teachers in northern Illinois. Jacob Wintrode came to Mendota after the Civil War and became a business partner of August Schultz in the tin and hardware business. Later he branched out on his own into the manufacture of tinware.

Jacob Miller manufactured cigars here after the Civil War.

Thomas Imus opened the only marble business in Mendota in 1857; it was operated by his son, Newton, later.

An insurance salesman who was once obliged to pay himself is Karl Pohl. While he still operated his business (began in 1922)

on Washington street, he was robbed of a rather considerable sum of money and after filling out the proper forms, he paid his own loss. Pohl's insurance business, moved in the late 1930's to the present location on Jefferson street, now handles real estate and building and loan affairs also. The building and loan organization was begun in 1925 with these original directors: K. W. Pohl, B. H. Reck, W. G. Van Etten, R. E. Hall, John Dubbs, O. J. Ellingen, Robert Allen, R. N. Crawford, Fim Murra, and A. C. McIntyre.

\* \* \*

Also on the humorous side of the insurance line is the Pohl agency's record of the night life of a small dog. The dog, whose owner had taken out a type of liability insurance, soon after joined a neighborhood gang of larger dogs. One dark night, the assured's dog went along with the fellows on a chicken hunt. Being the smallest of the lot, he was elected to enter the chicken coop's small door and chase out the victims who were eaten by the instigators of the crime. When the chicken owner heard the racket and came to slam the chicken coop door, the small dog was caught redhanded. The dog's owner received a 'phone call from the police station the next day to inform him that he owed \$50 on the prize chickens sent to their death by his dog. Pohl's paid off.

Despite rising costs, the Mendota Five and Ten Cent Store has kept its original title since it was opened by Erma Billhorn in 1909, and some items can still be purchased for a nickel or dime. Miss Billhorn's sister, Mrs. Flora Lowd, is now a business partner. The type of merchandise, too, has remained much the same through the years although styles have changed.

From the early men's clothing stores of S. B. Dix and Adolph Karger the present day shops of Julian Erbes and David Sohn have emerged. Dix, a Vermonter, began his business here in 1874 with I. Higgins. In 1878 he bought his partner's share and later opened a branch store in Paw Paw for his custom and ready made trade. In the 1890's Charles Erbes bought Dix's business, located where it now is on Washington street. The very finest gentleman shopper then had a choice of either a blue or a grey suit of the same style. He shopped for a fur coat (perhaps calfskin or coonskin) and long wool underwear for smart winter wear—merchandise of the past and no longer kept in stock. Re-stocked now are the string tie racks, a fashion of 50 years ago revived during the Centennial season. The ties which used to be small and neat in pattern or plain tend to be similar today, although they are now ready tied and clipons. Upon Charles Erbes's

death in 1920 his sons, Julian and Karl, became partners in the business until Karl's retirement in 1947 when Julian became sole owner.

## "KARGER PANTS ARE DOWN"

"Karger pants are way down" was the slogan Adolph Karger painted on wooden boards nailed to country fenceposts around Mendota. Adolph Karger opened his store first on Washington street and later moved to several places on Main street, ending up where the current Sohn menswear store is. His brother, Fred, operated it from Adolph's death in 1940 until 1941. A feature of the Karger store was the collar case, a rectangular, movable showcase with glass on three sides. When the store opened in the morning the case was moved outdoors to display a variety of collars — at closing time it went back in.

R. E. Hall began his business in a building near his present location, to which he moved in 1912.

Specialization has touched even the furniture and undertaking trades. The Schwarz funeral home, which has been in the same family for 68 years, began as a furniture store-funeral parlor. Joseph Schwarz, a cabinet maker by trade, came from Germany to establish his business here in 1885 where Westerman's store now is. His son, Frank J., later became owner and was one of the first persons in Illinois to apply for an embalmer's license. Frank, as well as his son, Edward J., brother, Leo, and son-in-law, Willard Johnson (the firm's present owner), attended Worsham's embalming school in Chicago. In the 1920's Frank sold out the furniture business, moved to where the post office now is, and sold phonographs and records along with his undertaking duties. In 1930 he moved to his father's family home on Jefferson street where he established the first "funeral home" in this area. Johnson has operated the home since Schwarz's death in 1941.

Early furniture dealers included Frederick Wershinski (1870, Washington street near Main street) and Alpheus Dean (1858, Washington street).

\* \* \*

Bailey's funeral service has been a fixture in the community for 61 years, F. R. Bailey having purchased an interest in the firm of Peter Schultes and Bill Hess, back in 1892, who were engaged in furniture, cabinet making, and undertaking. Mr. Bailey spent three weeks in Chicago studying embalming. The firm was located in the building

on Washington street now occupied by Westerman's, succeeding the Dean furniture store.

Mr. Bailey soon purchased the interests of his partners and moved to the Faber building on Illinois avenue, where the Faber barbershop now is; later to larger quarters in the Cooper building on Washington street (now King's furniture store). In 1916 Mr. Bailey purchased and did business in the Eckart building on Illinois avenue (present A and P store), until 1937, when his son, Ralph F. Bailey, became owner.

Following the disastrous fire of 1937 a modern funeral home was established in the large residence at Indiana avenue and Jefferson. Ralph F. Bailey had been employed with his father starting in 1910. He received his license as registered embalmer and funeral director in 1922.

Associated with the Bailey establishment for many years were C. E. Merritt and A. J. Tapper. Mr. Merritt and his son, Willard, now operate Merritt funeral home. Mr. Merritt, long active in Masonic work, began in this line of work in October, 1911.

J. H. Walker's furniture, carpet, and linoleum business moved from Washington st. where it was established in 1913 to Illinois avenue and later to its present site on Main street about 18 years ago. It was formerly a dry goods store as well as rugs and ready-to-wear.

Charles Sonntag originally dealt in dry goods, beginning in 1900. He occupied the building where Walker's furniture company now is until he sold out the dry goods business to open a shade and floor covering shop on Illinois avenue.

One of Mendota's first businessmen was Samuel Hastings, a druggist whose career began in 1855 when he opened a dry goods store. His drug store opened in 1876 after he'd clerked for the W. T. Black dry goods and W. F. Corbus drug stores for many years. Forerunner of Goslin's drug store was one of the two Schuetz and Denison stores. These men joined forces in 1871 — Denison operated the corner store on Washington and Main streets, while Schuetz presided at the store located next to the Candy Kitchen. Frank Fritz from Earlville took over upon Denison's death. In 1939 Arthur and Alfred Goslin, brothers, bought the store. Alfred died in 1940. This building had first been occupied by the Fernberg store.

Adolph Tesche, drug store owner since 1890 until his retirement, has seen 60 years of progress in the drug business. When he and Max Haass were co-owners of the store on Main street, the beginning of microscopic germ discovery was beginning to make its mark on the drug products and advertising. Hollywood glamour queens were becoming models of beauty to be copied by feminine drug store customers. The cosmetic trade grew from a limited supply of products



with little advertising by manufacturers in Mr. Tesche's early days to the present stock of many and various cosmetics highly advertised.

The trio of John Schaller, Louis Knauer, and Fred Billhorn established the Mendota Manufacturing & Transfer Co. in the spot where it's now located in 1889. William Schaller bought Knauer's share of stock; John's son, Harry, bought out William; John bought Billhorn's share upon the latter's death; and at one time Julius Schaller was one of the owners. At present the business is owned by the Harry F. Schaller family. The original building was added on to in the 1920's.

Horticulturist was the term for florist a century ago when Benjamin Moss owned two greenhouses. Bernard Katzwinkel called his greenhouses the Restland Floral company when he established the business in 1906. Katzwinkel, who had learned his trade in Chicago, mostly at Rosehill cemetery, was an enthusiastic landscaper. Since 1948 Kynard McCormick and Edward Robinson have been operating the firm. Remodeling began in 1953.

The Schweitzer greenhouses existed back in 1900, and were almost totally destroyed by the 1903 Tornado.

The Muzzy Photo Studio dates back 50 years, when R. L. Muzzy took over the Keller studio, although Mr. Muzzy had been in the business working first for Gerard and then for Clark and others 20 years prior to that. In the last half century the Muzzy firm absorbed photographers Smith and Dean. Arthur B. Muzzy, the present owner, began in the business 55 years ago. His father, R. L. Muzzy, died in 1948 at age 89.

## EDWARDS HARDWARE IS OLDEST

Undoubtedly the oldest Mendota firm still in business is Edwards & Son hardware store. The Rev. William Edwards, great grandfather of the present owner, Marvin L. Edwards, began the business in 1865 in what is now the Hi-Way Grill. At that time the store's tin shop produced hand made utensils — copper tea kettles, wash basins, tin pans, kettles, coffee pots, etc. Buyers for the merchandise were usually peddlers who drove their horse-drawn wagons over country roads to exchange hardware for the farmers' chickens, eggs, or produce.

When fire destroyed all wood buildings on Washington street from the present OK Food market to King's Furniture store, where a brick wall prevented further spreading, new buildings were built on the site of the burned ones.

In 1870 Edwards moved his store into what is now a part of Spurgeon's. George W. and George B. Edwards became co-owners. Underneath the back of the store was a shed where scrap copper and

brass were stored. Youthful pranksters liked to steal the scrap metal and bring it to the store the next day to resell.

A steel stove once proved the downfall of one of the store's owners; his helper, Casper Frey; horse; wagon, and all. Edwards and Frey were delivering a stove to a farm home when their horse became frightened by a white rock just as they were crossing a bridge without a guard rail. As the horse backed up in fright, the wagon's right front wheel rolled off the bridge. Although the men managed to jump to the bridge in time, horse, wagon, and stove fell into the creek. No damage was done, however; the merchandise was reloaded; and the farmer's wife got her stove.

## ROBBERS MADE GETAWAY

Among the many times the store has been robbed, perhaps the most memorable such occasion was the night the Edwards home telephone rang . . Marvin, answering the instrument, was told that the store had been robbed. He and his father rushed down to find Frank Lutz, the night policeman, pointing a revolver at the lower rear window. Lutz reported that he had caught one robber as he tried to enter through the window and had locked him up in the jail. The other criminal, he said, was inside. Meanwhile, John Holland, another policeman, came along; when he and Edwards entered the store to catch the second thief, they found the store empty and the robber escaped. The group of men walked to the jail only to find that the first robber had escaped the jail and taken five other prisoners with him. The prisoners had completely robbed the police chief's collection of revolvers, brass knuckles, etc., collected from hobos.

Inventions made in the Edwards hardware store include the first model of the Eclipse Single bar adjustment hand mower, first model of the Cow Boy tank heater, and the Tip Top flue stop.

In 1933 the store moved to what later became Schmehr Hardware store on Illinois avenue. After a fire damaged much of the merchandise, the stock was moved to the Candy Kitchen building, where a fire sale was held. Subsequent moves were made to where King's Furniture store now is and to the present location on Main street.

\* \* \*

Also opened within the same decade was the Curtiss & Rude hardware store. It later became Curtiss & (George) Holland, then Holland & Co. Upon George Holland's death in 1933, his daughter, Mrs.

James Nuckley, became joint owner with her stepmother, whose share she bought in 1947. George Holland became a part of the "Wild Bill" Hickok lore when he arranged for travel by livery horse for Hickok from Mendota to Troy Grove. During his term as city clerk, Holland, Mayor Shepley, and the aldermen met around the hardware store's pot-bellied stove for their city council meetings. Their meetings were climaxed by the arrival of Billy's train, which brought the Chicago paper to town after supper. Because of the stock of some hard-to-get items, a customer once commented, "If you can't get it at Holland's, get it at Nisley's."

\* \* \*

The term "Nisley's" refers of course to the Ed Nisley dry good store which operated for over half a century in the same location on Washington street now occupied by Foster's upholstery shop. Ed Nisley was a merchant of the old school and indeed did carry everything. It is said he never changed his prices and this meant bargains in recent years, although some items thoroughly outdated were overpriced, but when the Nisley store closed out in 1953 due to the illness of Mr. Nisley the store was a treasure-house of things long since obsolete. These items, such as parasols, high-top shoes and odd petticoats were avidly grabbed up by Mendota women as the sale was just in time to buy costume material for the 1953 Centennial.

Nisley continued to sell yardgoods and threads and notions long after other merchants gave up on these lines.

Herbert Waldorf, a creative milliner who earned real distinction in his field serving the fashionable trade in the East, located in Mendota during the 20's and was a popular milliner.

\* \* \*

It would take a history book in itself to chronicle completely all the interesting businesses which thrived at one time in the city. Fleeting names come to mind, such as the Fischer grocery, the Schmitz Brothers grocery, Harbaugh's grocery, Truckenbrod's jewelers, Ben-nauer's cigar store, Ed. Lathrop's grocery, and many others. The Erbes grocery and market, located where the National food store is now located, was a flourishing business in the 20's. It was Mendota's first supermarket and did a fabulous business. John Virgil has been quietly repairing shoes in Mendota since 1911. First he repaired shoes for the W. E. Large shoe store on Illinois avenue, later for Henry Stenger and Huss and Bush, and started for himself in the basement of the Hotel Faber in 1920.

The list is long . . . and our space is short.

The Kramer and Cannon barbershop was a fixture in Mendota for half a century. Carl Kramer, who still takes an occasional stand at a barber chair, had a shop on Illinois avenue. He joined forces with Ed. J. Cannon who had barbered in the Jacob Reul shop. Thus began a partnership that lasted for nearly 50 years until Ed Cannon's death in 1948. An interesting adjunct to the barbering business were the tub baths which were rented for a small fee. Remembered, too, is the famous lemon tree which grew for many years in the window. This is now Faber's barbershop.

John Gross, who retired in 1949, joined Kramer and Cannon shortly after their shop was established in 1902. This 46 years plus service with Adam Kliyla comprised a 51-year career in barbering. It is said that the trio of Kramer, Cannon, and Gross worked together the longest period of any barbering combination in Illinois.

Adam Kliyla operated a shop on Main street. Reul and Degenhardt had a shop on Jefferson street opposite "Hotel English", now Hotel Faber. Buckner and Allen was another Main street barbershop.

Present dean of Mendota barbers is probably George Neff, who operates a second floor shop on Main street.

Henry Hillmer, now aged 94, came to Mendota in 1882 after learning the cobbler trade in Germany. He retired after 60 years of mending shoes.

\* \* \*

Quite a number of present-day merchants and professional men have been in business here 25 years and upwards, in addition to those described elsewhere. Other names which can qualify for a "quarter-of-a-century club" are Harry and Forrest Fahler, B. Harry Reck, John Dubbs, Henry G. Kohl, Gilbert Truckenbrod, John Westerman, Paul Faber, Srul Koopersmith (established 1911), W. S. Neilson (who established the United Cigar store with Jim McDonald in 1921), Charles Bader (recently retired), Joseph and Ben Zolper, Purity Ice Cream Company, Schmitt's Mendota Monument Company, Roy McInturf, Dr. F. J. Krenz, Elmer Beitsch, Jacob Brothers Coal (succeeding George Nauman).

The Mendota Farmers' Co-Op Supply Co. was established in 1908. Parsons Junk Yard began in 1913, and H. Shapiro in 1915.

Other business establishments in business over 25 years, with various managers, are the A and P store, Kroger's, Spurgeon's, and the Waldorf Cafe. Ira Smith was proprietor of the latter in the 20's. He's still in Mendota and still a very good cook. Alexander Lumber Co. is another long-established business, with which D. M. Lotts and S. C. Cash were identified for many years.



## PISTOL PACKIN' PAPAS

MENDOTA HAS HAD its share of crime, large and small, but the vigilance of the police and the earnestness of the citizens and city officials has been such that never did crime get much out of hand. There were long periods of law-abiding quiet.

There have been murders, cattle rustlers, and horse thieves. There have been women seducers and riots, shootings and knifings — crimes of jealousy, passion, and hate. But all this has gone into making the colorful history of the police of Mendota.

There has been a succession of colorful town marshals, and one of them was E. G. McIntire who was elected marshal in 1880 at a salary of \$150 a month. Other marshals have had more onerous criminals, but none possibly were called upon to handle as famous a character as did Marshal McIntire.

McIntire was a fearless man. He was minus most of the fingers on both hands, and during his time many arrests were made. Fingers or no fingers he was called upon to "put the finger" on the great John L. Sullivan, the famous prize fighter of the time. At least so the story goes.

It is said that the great "Jawn L", who feared no man, stopped in the Mendota lunch room of one John Aldrich, located where the Spurgeon store now stands. He was drunk and disorderly. This was nothing new for John L. Sullivan, who, it seems, trained on whiskey. McIntire was called and he apprehended Sullivan.

"Do you know who you are arresting?" shouted Sullivan, adding that he was none other than John L. Sullivan, the world's champion pugilist.

"So what! You are under arrest," retorted McIntire, who escorted the great man to jail where he was fined \$25 and costs. The newspaper of the time carried the story that John L. was on his way back to Mississippi to answer charges against him for unlawful fighting.

## BECKET MARSHAL 33 YEARS

Another colorful town marshal was Charles Becket, who looked after the peace of the city for a span of 33 years, from 1900 to 1933. He was elected marshal and later when an ordinance was passed giving the mayor the power to appoint the minion of the law, "Charley" Becket received the appointment as police chief.

He was always respectfully called "marshal," however. He was a large, tall, broad-chested man and habitually wore a large western style felt hat. He was firm and gruff, and could stare a hobo or an itinerant gypsy horde out of town. It is said that when a speeder wouldn't stop he would shoot his tires flat, but this is not confirmed.

Charley was very nice to children, but they still held him in awe. So did the hobos, who knew him from coast to coast and those who knew him gave the town a wide berth in their travels. Becket and his assistants were given credit for cleaning up misbehavior in Mendota.

Probably the only time that things got out of hand with Marshal Becket was on one rainy day when the circus was in town. The circus men, having nothing to do, went on a drunk. They were hanging around the depot and started a riot with local men.

"Are you from Mendota?" they would ask as they came up to a man. If the citizen replied in the affirmative, the circus men would sock him. Local citizens were quickly drawn to the vicinity of the depot to help quell the riot or to protect their pals. Many gathered across the street at a respectful distance to watch the goings-on.

The riot got out of hand and the police were called to break it up. One of the rioters shot a bullet through the door of the depot, wounding some of the rioters. The bullet hole was still there for many years, as awesome testimony of the "circus riot."

The next year when the circus came to town some of the circus men, still bearing a grudge, tried to kindle the riot again. Special Policeman John Faber ran the owner up into the hotel. The man

tried to get out the window of the fourth floor, but was caught and hauled off to jail.

\* \* \*

Duties of constables have ranged from lighting the street lights to handling the parking meters in the present day. One constable, in 1857, apparently was paid what the city could afford, for he presented his bill to the council. But today's police are paid about \$250 per month.

Some of the criminals have been apprehended, some may be serving penitentiary terms, and some were never caught. Most of it all has been tragic, but a small part has had its humorous side.

Our readers have heard of "de Lawd" who is one of the chief characters of the American folk play, "Green Pastures." In Mendota police history there was actually a "de Lawd." He was D. W. Lawd who was elected police magistrate in 1872.

Historians have to turn sleuths themselves to run down a history of Mendota police activities, because a few years ago the record book disappeared from the police station. Police are still looking for it, and in their relentless way some day doubtless will recover it.

The first police magistrate was elected in 1857, when Levi Kelsey defeated J. C. Crooker, 123 to 93. He was also the banker and was known to the Indians as "Big Axe." The first constable and collector was Sampson Clark, in 1856. In 1858 Alonzo M. Davis was appointed constable. From then on the constable was changed so often for a time that it is impossible to keep track of them all. Sometimes they served just two weeks; and then a new one.

The rapid turn-over of constables may have been due to the poor pay. The records show that in 1860 the constable presented to the city a bill for \$12 for services rendered. This was chopped down to \$10 and paid.

## THAT "GLORIOUS" CALABOOSE

Glories of the not-entirely-forgotten past include that famous calaboose, or jail, which stood for so many years on the site of the present city clerk's office. Its glum and dank interior was no invitation to incarceration. Most of its early inhabitants were drunks and vagrants. The children in those days gave this ominous hoosegow a wide berth, taking quickly to the opposite side of the street to avoid passing in front of it. It was truly a deterrent to any contemplated life of crime.

Plans for the calaboose were presented at the May 6, 1859, meeting of the city fathers, and a couple of weeks later a contract was awarded to Henry Gillett for \$333 to build this bastille. It could not have been too bad in its infancy, for the April 2, 1860, meeting of the council was held within the calaboose. In 1870 some repairs were made on the building. At least The Bulletin was able to report that it was in good condition, newly white-washed and well ventilated and dry.

"Good enough for a drunken man or any other man," commented the editor.

The same year the city passed a resolution to buy the property on which the calaboose was located. Apparently previously the ground had been leased. In 1873 a grate door was placed on the cell. The paper of that date reports that the mayor got a little mixed up in his order and that *two* grate doors were delivered.

A commission was appointed in 1880 to draw up plans and specifications for a new jail-house; but later in the same year they decided to repair the old one instead, at a cost not to exceed \$250. But nothing was too good for Mendota's incarcerated — in 1883 a gas lamp was placed in front of the calaboose.

## INGLORIOUS END TO CALABOOSE

Thus it went on, serving its purpose in life, until in 1903 when calamity struck. We will let The Mendota Sun-Bulletin of the time describe it. The paper wrote: "The palatial structure which is known as our city calaboose was discovered to be on fire and the fire had such a start before it was discovered that it is a complete wreck. It is rumored that the inmates filled the stove with coal, and then fell asleep. The fire being the result of an over-heated chimney. The city council can now turn its attention to the building of a new city jail, which has been much talked about for some time."

This is exactly what the town burghers proceeded to do. In 1904 H. Zolper was awarded the contract for the new building and later that year the city police department moved into the new Police and Fire building. New desks and furniture were purchased. They also purchased police whistles, installed electric lights and telephones. The total cost was reported to have been \$7,508.

Of this sum, \$261.75 went for new jail cells.

During the time of construction the jail was temporarily housed in a tool shed. This brought a protest from the city workers, who



said they did not dare lay their coats down. It seems they would be full of cooties and lice when they wanted to wear the garments.

One of the last episodes of the old calaboose before it burned was the suicide of Dr. English, who at that time was a prominent Mendota physician. Dr. English had been arrested and placed in jail. This so unnerved him and he could not bear the shame of his arrest, and so took his own life.

\* \* \*

Among the early constables were John Manley, Edwin Straw, R. L. Porter, James Dunning, Joseph Neff, George Wood, and Tom Kaufmann.

Thomas Forrestall was elected to the post in 1869. He served for a number of years with the exception of one period when he resigned and the office of police constable was left open.

The vacancy was temporarily filled, it is recorded, by Patrick O'Riley. He being the same Patrick O'Riley who as a saloon-keeper had caused the marshal so much trouble. It appears that he would sample of the wares of the various saloons and then brandish his pistols in true western style, threatening to shoot up the place. The council quickly put a stop to this monkey business and they apprehended O'Riley.

Feeling ran so high that Alderman Crooker in the same year offered a resolution to dispense with the day police. The motion lost.

One of the stories of this period recalls that the city marshal was discharged by the council for hauling beer into the calaboose when the only prisoner was a "lady."

A mild crime wave overtook the city in 1870. A motion in the council calling for appointment of a night policeman lost. Again the following year a similar motion lost, but later that year volunteer fire police for night duty were organized.

D. O. Kane was made night policeman at a salary of \$25 per month. In 1879 Warren W. Barrett was the marshal and John M. Stevenson was the night policeman.

## "PATSY" HART AND "NERO"

Later that same year another colorful custodian of the law was named night policeman. He was Pat "Patsy" Hart. Patsy was wounded in a shooting affray at the railroad yards and carried the bullet until his death. After this shooting he was given a Great Dane dog, named Nero. Nero accompanied his master on his rounds every night and the

dog became well known to everyone in town. Patsy and his Great Dane dog on their nightly rounds became a familiar sight.

In 1885 T. B. Bailey was night policeman. Then came William Walter, followed by L. E. Behel, James McEvoy, J. Stellwagen, Charles Westgate and John Holland. In 1894 John Holland was elected city marshal and F. L. Smith and W. B. Nolan were the night police. In 1897 Charles F. Huck was the marshal and Anthony Manley and N. J. Riegel were night police.

F. Ellingen was night police in 1898, and Charles Becket became marshal in 1900. Under Becket as police officers over the years were F. L. Smith, William Hess, L. D. Worsley, Daniel McMahon, Harvey Williamson, Fred Bieser, John Manley, Frank Lutz, Godfrey Ichorn, and Shirley Hanson. Also during this time John H. Faber served as special police.

In 1933 Godfrey Ichorn was appointed chief of police and has served through the present time. The police force today consists of the chief and four regular men — Charlie Taylor, Emmett Nowlin, John Biers and Art Dalton.

The first police car was purchased in 1941. Before that time the police used a two-wheel cart. In the old days the police used a dray-cart with a long platform. The driver would ride on the back end to keep the front end stable.

The jail as it is today consists of two cells and a bull pen. The police are connected to the county sheriff's office by two-way radio.

\* \* \*

Over the years there were many flare-ups which called out the constabulary in a hurry. Some of these were trivial, and many ended in death. A hundred years is a long time, and many passions are aroused, even in a community with 3,000 to 4,000 population augmented by itinerants.

We will let accounts from the public press of this span of years tell some of the more lurid of the fracas that took place:

1856 — George Lamb, the proprietor of Lamb's Hotel, secretly married Louise Shurtleff in 1856, at which time she was living in Mendota with her father. In 1858, he joined her in the South, telling her father he was taking her to Memphis. Four weeks later he returned telling her father she had died and was buried in Memphis. Later, 1859, he returned to Mendota and continued to run the hotel and joined the Baptist church. The girl's father became suspicious and told the story to Clark and Levi Kelsey. Someone had seen Lamb in St. Louis when he was supposed to be in Memphis.

This and additional circumstances led to his arrest. He was taken

to St. Louis where a lengthy trial was held. Many Mendota residents made the trip and offered character witness for the defendant. He admitted giving her medicine to produce abortion, then drowning her in the river while she was dying from the result of the medicine. He was convicted and sentenced to hang.

Later, when the hotel was reopened, the place was searched for missing persons and a floor was pulled up and a decomposed body found. It proved to be a porker. Then a rumor was circulated to the effect that Lamb's wife was living in Ohio and had remarried.

About this time the paper printed a story to the effect that Mendota was a gambling hole — a rendezvous for gamblers and thimblerriggers.

April 15, 1859 — Charles Anderson shot John Heath with pistol. The two had been good friends but had got into an argument over a card game. Anderson was acquitted — the case not fully made out.

Oct 14, 1860 — A citizen beaten to death. A fatal affray occurred in front of Meisenbach's saloon on Main street. Schneck a German was beaten by an Irishman. Both the German and Irish were very quiet about the affray. Both are willing to let the law take its course. One Lary O'Brien was sentenced to one year in prison.

June 27, 1860 — \$25 Reward. A carpet-sack of brussels cloth fastened with straps and containing pants, shirts, a revolver, newspapers, books, letters addressed to J. E. Cowles and notes and accounts of Nelson & Company, New York, was taken from the Passenger House.

Dan Kane, R. R. watchman, caught a suspicious character making off with C. H. Bush's dummy watch sign.

June 20, 1867 — First prosecution for violation of new city ordinance for being drunk and disorderly. Prosecution quashed on technical point.

Ordinance passed to have one night police. The marshal's hours to be from 11:30 a.m. until 11:30 p.m. All this for \$45 per month.

July 4, 1867 — Mike Phalen arrested for making too much noise and being drunk. He resisted arrest and was hit on the head by the marshal. A riot was imminent until the marshal got out of the way.

Jan. 14, 1869 — Some rascals the night of the fire stole the wearing apparel of some of the women who tenanted the old Eagle hotel building. "Such scamps ought not be allowed to live in a respectable community."

May 25, 1870 — Passenger seized when leaving the cars by two burly fellows who tore off diamond pin worth \$450 from shirt bosom.

May 22, 1870 — A man drugged on the train by two men who fleeced him of \$100. He was taken to the Passenger House and put

to bed. He jumped from the second story window and stole a horse, but was all right when the effects of the drug wore off.

\* \* \*

June 3, 1870 — John Keezel, a worker in Imus' marble shop, murdered by Jacob Haas, a wagon maker, while walking with a young lady near the north limits of the city. He stabbed him with a pocket dirk knife. It was the aftermath of Sunday beer parties held in a beer garden located where the Katzwinkel home now stands, east of Restland greenhouses.

Keezel died on Tuesday and was buried Wednesday. Haas was apprehended and brought to trial. He didn't understand English.

The pastor of the M.E. Church preached a sermon the following Sunday evening, "Lager Beer as a Murderer."

## PAT O'RILEY AGAIN

1873 — A Bloody Affray. Thomas Forrestall, marshal, and Pat O'Riley, saloon keeper. Mr. Taylor, manager of the Passenger House interfered in the marshal's behalf and received a cut in the neck three inches long. Marshal Forrestall was cared for by Mr. and Mrs. Taylor in the Passenger House.

Sept., 1873 — Seven boys (age 8-15) were arrested on a warrant sworn out by Philo Castle for lawlessness and malicious mischief. All held to bail for \$150 to \$500. They are to appear before circuit court.

April 28, 1876 — Eight persons are now posted as habitual drunkards, including one woman "Aunt Ellen."

June 2, 1876 — Edwards and Sons robbed of four revolvers and one pocket knife.

August 5, 1876 — Marshal Forrestall incurred a head injury chasing Jim McMahon up the tracks.

April 18, 1877 — Marshal arrests two young men of Mendota for driving horses until they dropped. Full of benzine (men, not horses). "They should have been roundly fined on Monday."

March 1, 1878 — Editorial in paper on whipping in schools — editor opposed.

March 8, 1879 — Shot dead — an unfortunate affair. Shooting of Charlie Price. An extremely unfortunate and tragic shooting affray resulted in the death of Charlie Price at the hands of Special Police McIvor. Both men interfered in a shuffle in the cloak room at the Social Union club. Price repeatedly hit McIvor who was on duty.



McIvor shot, killing Price. Jury brought in verdict of justifiable shooting. There had been no enmity between the two men.

June 21, 1880 — The fellow who operates the street sprinkler in a shooting with the husband of the lady upon whom he has been calling.

Jan. 24, 1880 — Doc Miller, wanted in Freeport for firing and robbing a tailor shop, caught and jailed here. He set a fire to his bedding and made his escape while the guards were putting out the fire. It is believed he got out of town by wearing women's clothing.

May 8, 1882 — Tom Wash, colored, killed in scuffle with Gabe Smith.

Sept. 8, 1883 — Dr. Rickey shot his wife and hid in a barn in the neighborhood (the barn of Rev. Ingles). After two days, during which time even dogs failed to track him down, he emerged with his throat cut, but survived. His sister stated insanity prevailed in the family. Indicted by the grand jury but was acquitted. He was judged insane at the time of the crime.

Nov. 24, 1883 — Burglary at Freedman and Fernberg store. Officer Hart, his dog Nero, and young Fernberg found the burglars under the counter.

Jan. 19, 1884 — The sheriff denies public admittance to the county jail after the Freedman and Fernberg store burglars made their escape. They had five small saws, a drill, a file and two other saws.

1884 — Wave of burglaries. Residence of J. Reul robbed. They got watch, neck chain, ring and \$10. After 11 p.m. of the same evening they tried to enter Wershinski's but raised Charles Erbes who slept in the store. Silver stolen at Ed Lathrop home.

1885 — Burglars at Dix Clothing store. Part of the loot recovered at the fairgrounds.

1886 — Rampart Ruffianism — Travelers set upon — young girl molested. Calls for vigilance on the part of our city government.

March 18, 1886 — Police make a false arrest. Thought to be the robbers. Released.

March 26, 1886 — Three saloon keepers fined \$25 for keeping their saloons open on Sundays.

April 2, 1887 — Marshal McIntire arrested William Orth, a butcher, for stealing hides. Orth wanted to go to his home to get a change of clothing. Marshal McIntire went with him and waited downstairs for him. Orth jumped from the upstairs window and escaped.

July 30, 1888 — Skelly Ryan arrested for breaking out of the calaboose. Several shots were fired. He is now in the county jail.

August 20, 1889 — A wave of burglaries while the circus is in town. The circus roustabouts and the hoboes have a free-for-all. Many arrests.

1889 — Thieves infest the city. Mrs. P. Faber's horse stolen. Recovered in Chicago.

May 18, 1889 — Marshal McIntire succeeded in raising \$60 for Decoration Day fund. (Evidently part of the marshal's duties.)

1891 — Burglars open safe of Mr. Jos. Franklin, who operates the Germania House saloon. \$400 cash and note of \$550 were stolen. The burglars first tied the dog's mouth with string and put him under a box in the shed. They were evidently professional because of the skillful manner in which they bored the holes in the safe.

June 6, 1890 — George Otterbach's team and carriage stolen from the public street in broad day light — last seen in Dixon. It is worth a large sum of money.

1891 — One of the notorious Johnson boys came to town and got into a fight with a railroad switchman. A deputy witnessed the fight and went to arrest Johnson who had gone home to the Tom Johnson residence in the south part of town. He resisted the deputy's attempt to arrest him so the deputy went back to town and got Marshal McIntire and several citizens. They went back to the Johnson residence where they had to shoot it out with the Johnson family holed up in the house. The house was shot full of holes and it is a wonder anyone escaped alive. All were taken to the county jail, including the Johnson women, who had participated in the shooting.

## FEMALE HORSE THIEVES

Sept. 19 — Marshal McIntire arrests female horse thieves, one dressed in men's clothing. The horses were stolen in Sandwich. The thieves were locked in a room in Pohl's Hotel and returned to Sandwich the next day.

1900 — William Hess, night police, arrested and discharged for striking a man unduly.

Oct. 25, 1901 — On this day some very suspicious characters were noticed in town. They had rented a livery from the livery stable and their actions aroused suspicion. They purchased some cartridges in the Edwards Hardware store. That evening they went on a crime spree and robbed three local homes.

Word quickly was passed around town that the robbers were at

the Henning home on Washington Street. All the local men went home and got their fire arms and returned to the Henning house. John Farrow, a special policeman, also went to investigate. In the dark, as everyone was sneaking around the house, Farrow came upon and started to beat up John Kehm, thinking him one of the robbers. A man by the name of Moltry, an employee of the Henning brewery, shot at the two men in the dark, he thinking they were both robbers. He shot Farrow in the back, killing him. Moltry was exonerated by the jury investigating the shooting.

The robbers were never apprehended. The police sent for bloodhounds and they trailed them out to the overhead bridge (the viaduct) but lost their trail.

Farrow was 38 years of age and was lauded for his bravery. His funeral was paid for by the city.

In those days the police carried dark lanterns.

1902 — Marshal Becket wounded on hand in a fracas with "certain local boys." Becket received a large gash on his hand. The boys were arrested for assault with a deadly weapon.

## MOUTH FULL — OF MONEY

1903 — Sept. 19, Frank Ward, a roomer in the Schamberger House, entered the room of W. F. Bush of Iowa and got away with \$22. Bush became suspicious of Ward and called Marshal Becket who went after Ward. When Ward was apprehended they noticed that his mouth looked full. Becket choked him and forced him to spit the money out which he had secreted in his mouth when he saw he was going to be caught. Ward was bound over to the grand jury.

1904 — Man caught robbing Edwards hardware store. This is the first reported for a long time and it is strange because by this time the police force of Mendota has a reputation in all surrounding towns for getting their man. Police are watching closely for wrongdoers.

Friday, March 20, 1903 — Two officers of the law come to blows. Justice of the Peace J. B. Wormley and policeman Dan McMahon met on Main street and had hot words about a statement made by Wormley about the way McMahon had discharged his duties. McMahon knocked Wormley down. He was fined \$10 for assault and battery. This is not the end of this affair.

Oct. 22, 1914 — Horse shooting. "Certain local boys" who were always in trouble had been apprehended for being drunk and dis-

orderly. They were being taken to jail by John Faber. He was rounding the corner, where the OK Market now stands, with a firm hold on each. One jerked away and the other engaged Faber in shuffle. While the one had him down the other one pulled a revolver and started to shoot at him. One bullet ripped through his coat and creased his hip. He shot back, but at that time a horse and carriage had got into his way and his shot killed the horse belonging to a Mr. Kopps. Victor Weber's horse was shot in the neck.

At about this time a gang was operating in Mendota. They would get some simple minded fellow to start a fire somewhere on the edge of town. Everyone would go to the fire, not locking their doors. This made it easy for the gang to do their looting while the people were not at home. They were all caught and served time in the penitentiary.

Oct., 1914 — The first jail break from the new jail. A negro broke the bars and he and a white prisoner escaped. The negro was caught.

October, 1914 — Some time between Saturday night and Sunday morning a dope fiend entered the office of Dr. A. C. McIntyre and stole some cocaine, 1000 tablets of morphine and the same number of tablets of heroin. Nothing else was taken. "These doses ought to last for a while."

In later years the police shot it out west of Mendota with two men who had escaped from the county jail. One was wounded and died in jail when gangrene set in.

The police picked up an escaped murderer, B. Anderson, colored, near Lake Mendota.

There have been others, one of them prominently headlined in all the Chicago papers. Due to the fact that many people who figured in recent police cases are still living here, we leave such incidents for future historians to record.

\* \* \*

All in all, things have quieted down a lot in the last third of the century. Burglaries are rare and most of the thievery is of the petty larceny variety, with an occasional stolen automobile. "Drunk and disorderly" is a charge which still dots the police calendar, and the pinching of speeding and reckless drivers keeps a squad car constantly on the prowl.

Police are kept busy attending accident cases and, of course, that new responsibility of the machine age . . . collecting pennies and nickels from parking meters and handing out parking tickets to those who do not hurry back to the car quickly enough before the red flag pops up.



## THE COUNTRY DOCTOR

**N**O MATTER HOW PROUDLY the Chamber of Commerce may announce new population figures for Mendota, or how many hospitals or clinics are built, the tradition of Mendota doctors through the years has always been that of "country doctor." This is a proud appellation. In addition to office hours and hospital hours, he makes his daily round of the sick and his trips often take him out on lonely country roads.

Though his equipment is modern and no longer are operations or childbirths performed in an emergency operating room in the family living room or kitchen, the Mendota doctor is still called out of bed at all hours and in all weather to take care of emergency calls. In a small community he dare not be a specialist but is physician, surgeon, bone-setter, and even psychiatrist.

He speeds about in a motor car, not a buggy, although the visits by buggy are keenly remembered by several of today's practicing physicians.

Mendota's doctors have taken medical advances in stride. Such an instrument back in the 1870's was the telephone. The press recorded that "Dr. E. P. Cook may now take an afternoon nap; a telephone from his residence to his office now permits such conduct on the part of the doctor, for if he is needed downtown an alarm is given and conversation may be very satisfactorily carried on over the wire." The editor added that the playing of the piano at the house is plainly

heard. He failed to state how the harried Dr. Cook would get that afternoon nap with the piano playing.

There have been quacks and charlatans, too, including faith healers and the inevitable Indian medicine man and herb doctor. Mendota did not give these healers much shrift. In 1871 there was a "celebrated" Indian herb doctor called Prof. R. J. Lyons, who took quarters at the passenger house periodically to give consultations and advice free of charge. The herb medicine, of course, was not free.

Ethical doctors do not advertise, but the professor did. He took an ad to proclaim:

*"I use such balms as have no strife  
With Nature or the laws of life,  
With blood my hands I never stain,  
Nor poison men to ease their pain."*

Doctors there were aplenty during the early years, and it is said that between the founding of the town in 1853 and 1876 there had been 28 physicians. Apparently many of them, like itinerant ministers, came and went in those early years.

Dr. John L. Teed was the first physician to practice in Mendota, but he did not live in the city proper. An early account states that he "lived in the suburbs," wherever that may be. He came to this locality in 1853 and remained until 1881, when he removed to Kansas City.

The first resident physician was Dr. J. W. Edwards who lived and practiced here for many years until he died in 1925. He came in 1854. Dr. Gorham came from LaMoille in 1854, but died of cholera in the same year.

Another early doctor who came to Mendota in 1854 was Dr. Emil Haass. He was also a druggist, and was a brother of Max A. F. Haass who remained as a druggist for many years. Dr. Emil Haass, left, however, in 1876.

Other early doctors were Drs. Beckwith, Boroff, Rev. U. P. Gollday who was an early minister as well as doctor, Rhodes, S. P. Kimball, James, Smeltzer, Garrison, Pregatzer, Baumbaugh, Karst, Secori, Preston, Eves, Tribelhorn, Potts, and two Dr. Bainters.

Then there was Dr. J. A. Hoffman, who practiced for a time in the old Seminary school building on Thirteenth avenue, before his son conducted the place as a hotel. Dr. Hoffman was a homeopath.

In the early days homeopathy was a popular form of treatment of ills, and in addition to Dr. Hoffman there was at one time a partnership between Dr. Frank Duncan and Dr. Ellen H. Maltbie. They held medical degrees and were also surgeons. Dr. Duncan graduated from the Hahnemann Medical College and Hospital, Chicago. He prac-

ticed with his brother in Chicago two years and later ran a water-cure at Osage, Iowa, where he was also county physician. He came to Mendota and took over the practice of Dr. Hoffman in 1883.

Associated with him was Mendota's only woman doctor, at least she is the only woman doctor revealed by local records. She was Dr. Ellen H. Maltbie. She was graduated from Cleveland Homeopathic Medical College in 1884 and located here the same year, apparently with a busy practice.

Then there was Dr. Gutwasser, a Uroscopian, who had an office on Illinois avenue. This once popular branch of medicine diagnosed diseases through the inspection of urine.

## THE FIRST BOARD OF HEALTH

Despite this active attention to the health of the community, there was no local board of health until about 1866, when a local board of health was established. The first members were Dr. J. C. Corbus, Dr. E. P. Cook, and Dr. J. W. Edwards. They prepared edicts and procedures for regulating the health of the community and the following year, July 18, 1867, an ordinance was created. At about the same time the local doctors were urging drainage of stagnant ponds in view of probable cholera during the summer. The health board also urged the cleaning of alleys within the city.

Two other doctors who practiced here before the Civil War were Drs. Thompson and Dodge.

Dr. John K. Richey, who was graduated from the St. Louis Eclectic Medical College and who served in the war, located in Mendota in 1880.

Dr. R. W. Gelbach, a native of Germany, was educated at Strasburg Medical College and also in Munich and others of the best medical schools of Germany, graduating with honors in medicine and surgery. After serving as assistant surgeon in the Bavarian army he came to Mendota to practice about 1882.

As early as 1870 the first medical society was established in La Salle and adjoining counties. Dr. E. P. Cook was the first chairman of this Medico-Pathological society, as it was called. Dr. J. C. Corbus was selected as the first president of the society, with Dr. Cook as treasurer. They adopted the American Code of Ethics.

Though there was little heavy industry in those days, the press records that Peter Donohue was injured when a heavy steel bar fell from above, hitting him on the head. Dr. John Teed took several stitches in the wound.

Public health was an increasing topic of interest to the townspeople, as shown by a large crowd which turned out in June of 1867 at the Congregational church to hear Dr. Susan Everett lecture on health.

And a farmer who sold milk wrote in to the editor to comment on the "fearful disclosures of disease and even death brought on by giving milk to children from cows fed on refuse of distilleries." This farmer, O. B. Banning, pointed out that the disease was traced to city cows fed on distillery refuse, or "poisoned leavings of breweries." He labeled them as whiskey-sick cows and stated that an examination of the milk under a microscope revealed an incredible state of conditions.

Dr. Guy T. Adams practiced here for nine years beginning in 1895. He died of pneumonia in 1904.

## SINGULAR FAMILY SUCCESSIONS

Mendota has had a number of singular father-to-son relationships in medicine over the years. There were five Doctor Cooks . . . three Doctor Corbuses . . . two Doctor McIntyres . . . two Doctor Harrises . . . and two Doctor Edwards (one of them a dentist).

Dr. Joseph W. Edwards, who came to Mendota in 1854, was the first physician and surgeon to locate in this community. He attended McKendry College at Lebanon and was graduated from Rush Medical College in Chicago. At the outbreak of the Civil War in 1861, Dr. Edwards volunteered for service and was appointed to the 40th Illinois Infantry as a staff surgeon. At one time he was surgeon at one of the hospitals in Memphis.

The work which he was called upon to perform in those years of army duty gave him an experience which was of great value in private practice. He was considered one of the best surgeons in this part of the country. Dr. Edwards was always a great student of medicine and was the first physician in this area to possess a high-powered microscope by which he could detect bacteria in samples which were sent to him by doctors from various cities and towns.

Dr. Edwards was also a great lover of flowers and the beauties of nature. He was a member of the Board of Education when the Lincoln School was erected, and served as alderman in his ward. Active in fraternal affairs, he was a thirty-second degree Mason and held many important posts in the local lodge. He died on September 8, 1925 at the age of 93 years.

Dr. Guy Judson Wormley, a graduate of Rush Medical College in Chicago, opened an office with Dr. Edwards here on April 1, 1893.



## FIVE DOCTOR COOKS

FOR NEARLY 100 YEARS descendants of William John Cook, M.D., engaged in the practice of medicine in Mendota. And during that span of nearly a century, from 1854 to 1953, five Cooks attended medical needs of residents in this Illinois community.

Opposition to slavery in the southern states started William John Cook on a westward trek that ended when he located in Mendota in 1854 to become an early member of the town's medical profession.

Born in 1793 in Hagerstown, Maryland, he attended the University of Maryland where, in 1827, he received his degree in medicine. Later he and his family resided on a plantation near Wellsburg, Virginia, now West Virginia, but because both he and his wife opposed the holding of slaves, the family moved on to East Springfield, Ohio. On the death of his wife the family traveled to Mendota and settled here. William John Cook practiced medicine in Mendota until his death in 1871. He had four sons, Edgar Pumphrey, William, David and John who died of a Civil war bullet wound incurred in Georgia.

Of the four sons, one, Edgar Pumphrey studied medicine. Born in Wellsburg in 1833 he went with his family to East Springfield, Ohio, but returned east to attend a boarding school. He was graduated in medicine from Western Reserve university at Cleveland, in 1854, the youngest member of his class. The next year he came to Mendota to practice medicine with his father.

During the Civil war Edgar Pumphrey Cook was appointed a surgeon in the service of the state of Illinois, and after the battle of Shiloh was ordered to field duty near Corinth, Mississippi, with a regiment of Illinois Volunteers.

While still a young physician he performed the first successful laryngotomy in the west and one of the early successful operations for ectopic gestation in the United States. In 1879 he was elected president of the Illinois State Medical society.

He was for many years president of the Mendota Public Library board and Cemetery association. In 1895 he served as a member of the city council, and due to his efforts Mendota undertook construction of its first sewer system.

Edgar Pumphrey Cook died October 31, 1902, and was survived by Charles Edgar and Edgar P., both of whom practiced medicine with their father in Mendota, Wells M., who later became a prominent Chicago judge, William, George, Mrs. Virginia C. Okey and Mrs. Katherine C. Haskell.

The second Edgar Pumphrey Cook, known later as both a brilliant and positive individual, was born August 18, 1870, in Mendota. He

attended public schools and was graduated from Blackstone high school in 1888. He then attended Northwestern university, and was graduated from there with honors in 1892. At Northwestern he was selected for membership in Phi Beta Kappa, an honorary scholastic society. Thereafter he entered the Chicago Medical college from which he was graduated in 1895 and at which he served as an associate professor for several years. On graduation from medical school he took post graduate study at Johns Hopkins university and later was named chief interne at Cook County hospital, Chicago. In addition he pursued his medical studies in Berlin, Germany, and Vienna, Austria.

Dr. E. P. Cook married in 1917 but his wife and infant child died in 1918 during the influenza epidemic. He died in 1923 of an illness contracted while attempting to save the life of another.

## DR. CHARLES E. COOK

Charles E. Cook, brother of the second Dr. E. P. Cook, established Mendota's first hospital facilities in the Cook home at the corner of Indiana avenue and Jefferson street. Crude as such facilities may have been by modern standards, the hospital pointed up the fact that the practice of medicine was leaving the horse and buggy era and entering a new period. Surgery was leaving the kitchen table and finding the convenience and safety of new tools and methods. "Doctor Charlie" and his brother, "Doctor E. P.", served medicine during that period of rapid transition.

Charles E. Cook was born April 19, 1859, in Mendota where he attended public schools and the Wartburg seminary. During his boyhood Mendota was an educational and cultural center, and it was during his early years that he gained a love for research into music, literature and the natural sciences.

Later, in 1879, he was graduated from Northwestern university. He then went on to study medicine at the Chicago Medical college. After receiving his medical degree in 1881 he took additional medical training in Germany and Austria for two years. He then returned to Mendota to practice medicine for the next 50 years.

Of scholarly disposition, Dr. Charles E. Cook was well acquainted with leading thinkers of his time. He was a linguist, learned but not aloof. His leisure hours were often spent studying Illinois plants and wildlife or encouraging others to broaden their cultural horizons. He was also active in civic affairs having served on the Blackstone school board and as a member of the library board. Dr. Charles E.

Cook died in 1931 leaving behind two sons, Edgar Charles and Allan Wylie.

\* \* \*

Last in the succession of Cooks to practice medicine in Mendota was Dr. Edgar Charles Cook who died in this Centennial year, 1953.

Edgar Charles Cook was born June 24, 1889, in Mendota where he attended public schools, graduating from the Blackstone high school in 1907. He then entered Lake Forest college and was graduated from that school in 1911.

His medical education was undertaken at the Harvard medical school, Boston, where he was graduated in 1915. His internship was completed at the Massachusetts General hospital. He then returned to Mendota where he began the practice of medicine with his father. Shortly thereafter he entered the medical corps of the United States army as a first lieutenant, and served in France during World War I. Returning to Mendota in 1919, he resumed the practice of medicine first in his father's office and later in the office built by his grandfather at 805 Jefferson street.

For many years he served as a councilor of the Illinois State Medical society, and held office in the LaSalle County Medical society.

In 1927 and 1930 Dr. Cook attended educational medical clinics in England, Germany, Austria and France. By means of such study he was able to keep abreast of modern medicine in a time when medical science was advancing rapidly both in the United States and abroad.

During his later years he devoted time and effort to the establishment of the Mendota Community hospital, and he served as a member of the board of directors of that institution until his death on February 6, 1953. He was also a member of the Graves Public library board. In addition he held membership in many other organizations working for the betterment of the Mendota community.

A man of broad intellectual achievement, Dr. Edgar Charles Cook found time to devote to the study of a multitude of subjects ranging from archeology to music.

## THE DOCTORS CORBUS

Dr. John C. Corbus was born September 30, 1833, at Millersburg, Ohio, where he attended public schools and the local academy. Upon graduating from the Medical Department of Western Reserve University at Cleveland, Ohio, he located at Orville, Ohio, but after one year moved to Lee county, Illinois, where he remained five years.

In 1862, Dr. Corbus was appointed First Assistant Surgeon of the Seventy-fifth Illinois Volunteer Infantry, and nine months later was promoted to the rank of Surgeon. Ill health, however, forced him to resign and in 1863 he settled in Mendota where he built up a large practice.

On April 29, 1865, Dr. J. C. Corbus and Dr. J. R. Corbus formed a partnership with offices on Washington St. On May 17, 1866, Drs. J. C. Corbus, E. P. Cook and J. W. Edwards were appointed as members of the first Board of Health in Mendota.

On February 6, 1899, Dr. Corbus was appointed Superintendent of the Illinois State Hospital at Kankakee, where he served for many years. Later he returned to Mendota and re-established private practice here.

Active in medical and fraternal circles, Dr. Corbus was president of the Illinois State Board of Charities for 12 years, member of the Illinois State Medical society and other state organizations. He was president of the Mendota school board for several years, member of the Masons, and a Knight Templar.

In 1870 he was married in Wayne County, Ohio, to Miss Minerva McFarland who died in Mendota in 1891. Later, he married Mrs. Helen E. Ruggles, widow of Robert Ruggles of Mendota.

\* \* \*

The most recent Doctor Corbus was Dr. J. C. Corbus, son of Dr. John Clark Corbus and Minerva C. McFarland Corbus, who was born in Malugin's Grove in Brooklyn township and who moved at the age of six to Mendota with his parents. He was graduated in medicine from the University of Iowa, practiced at Ozark county, Missouri, then at LaMoille. On April 18, 1890, he was married to Jeanie A. Wylie and moved to Troy Grove where he practiced for six years.

Dr. Corbus then moved to Mendota where he practiced for 37 years. He was active in medical societies, in Masonic lodges, Elks, and Kiwanis. He passed away in a hospital in Chicago in 1933, and was buried in Mendota.

## DR. O. P. HARRIS, DR. CHARLES HARRIS

Dr. Oscar P. Harris was born near Arlington, Bureau County, in 1870. When he was a year old, his parents moved to a farm north of Mendota. He attended the country schools and later East Mendota High School where he graduated in 1887. Although the school was



six miles from his home, Dr. Harris is remembered as never being absent or tardy.

After completing high school, he worked as a fireman on the Burlington Railroad and later did farm work. Upon deciding to become a doctor, he attended the University of Chicago and then Rush Medical College from which he graduated in 1902. That same year he returned to Mendota and became associated with Dr. Joseph W. Edwards. Several years later, Dr. Harris opened his own office, and in 1918 built and occupied Harris Hospital. During his life as a doctor, Dr. Harris delivered 2,881 babies in this community. Dr. Harris served on the School Board, as an alderman, and was also city physician for a number of years. He died October 27, 1933.

\* \* \*

Dr. Charles O. Harris is the nephew of Dr. O. P. Harris. Reared near Triumph, he graduated from Mendota high school in 1921 and through the influence of his uncle, Dr. O. P. Harris, he entered the University of Chicago, majoring in chemistry and botany. He was graduated from Rush Medical school in Chicago in 1927, having completed his course one year early by attending summer schools. He served a five months internship in pathology at St. Luke's hospital in Chicago, and later at Cook county hospital. At the age of 27 he entered practice in Mendota with his uncle, in 1929.

He has carried on farming activities the past 15 years with his brother, George. He was active in the organization of the First State bank, being its first and continuous president. He is a charter member of the Lions club.

With Dr. O. P. Harris he assisted in the management of the Harris hospital, guiding it alone after the death of Mrs. O. P. Harris. He worked hard and gave generously in achieving the new community hospital, and served as head of the staff until 1953.

A modern clinic and office building was built by Dr. Harris in association with Dr. R. H. Musick. This is located at 601 Fifth avenue, and was opened in 1951. It offers office facilities for office consultation, but essentially all laboratory work is done in the community hospital laboratory.

## THE DOCTORS McINTYRE

Dr. A. C. McIntyre was born in Mendota on September 24, 1872, the son of Elbridge and Ella McIntyre. He attended the local public schools and was graduated from East Mendota High School in 1890.

After graduation from the College of Physicians and Surgeons in Chicago in 1902, Dr. McIntyre first practiced at Troy Grove. Later he went abroad and studied in clinics at Edinborough, London and Berlin. He returned to Mendota in 1909 and established a practice here.

Prominent in fraternal orders and social circles, Dr. McIntyre was a member of Mendota Kiwanis, Isaac Walton League, Elks, Masons, White Shrine, Eastern Star, Odd Fellows, Mystic Workers and Modern Woodmen. His wife was the former Miss Flora Snyder. He had one son, Elbridge, who also entered the medical profession.

Dr. McIntyre practiced here until his death on May 18, 1929.

\* \* \*

Dr. Elbridge McIntyre, the son of Dr. and Mrs. A. C. McIntyre, attended medical school in Chicago and practiced there for several years. Later he returned to Mendota and practiced medicine here for a short time until he established an office in Princeton where his death occurred.

\* \* \*

Dr. John H. Edgcomb, though not a practicing physician in Mendota, was born here. His mother, the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. D. L. Harris, pioneer residents of Mendota, died when he was three years old. He received his medical education in Chicago, served with the Army Medical Corps in World War I, and then moved to Ottawa where he practiced for 31 years. He was known especially for his great skill as a surgeon. He retired from practice in 1946 and later served two terms as president of the Ottawa high school board of education. He was candidate for mayor of Ottawa the year of his death, 1952.

Dr. W. M. Avery got his education at Northern Illinois Normal college, Dixon, and after teaching several years, studied medicine at Rush medical college, at Chicago. He was graduated in 1901. He started practice with Dr. Chandler at Paw Paw in 1906 and moved to Mendota in 1927.

Dr. Elliott Faulk was born in Belgium in 1913. He received his medical education at the University of Paris and at Cook County hospital in Chicago. He practiced in Athens, Illinois and later moved to Rochelle. After serving in World War II, he returned to Rochelle. He moved to Mendota with his family in April, 1950.

Dr. M. Gleason received his medical education at Creighton medical school, Omaha. He was a major in the Medical Corps from September, 1942, until February, 1946. He practiced in Mendota from 1929 until his death, December 25, 1950.

Dr. J. F. Wacker received his medical education at the University of Illinois. He started practice in Mendota in August, 1951, in the office of Dr. Edgar C. Cook.

Dr. R. H. Musick received his medical education at Northwestern University school of medicine. He served as captain in the Medical Corps from May, 1942, until December, 1945. He started practice in Mendota in January, 1934. He is associated with Dr. Charles Harris at the Harris and Musick clinic.

## BEFORE HOSPITALS

Before any hospital facilities were available in Mendota, patients were cared for in their homes. When surgery was indicated, the nurse and doctor made the necessary preparations a day in advance. The room was thoroughly cleaned. Everything that could be stuffed into a boiler was sterilized. Kitchen table was scrubbed and used as an operating table.

Later Dr. E. P. Cook installed some surgical equipment in a room adjoining his office. This room contained a bed where patients were sometimes kept until they could be taken home.

Because Dr. Cook was the city physician he was called for accident cases involving transients. On one occasion a man was struck by a train. He was taken to Dr. Cook's office where a foot was amputated. No registered nurse was available; so Dr. Cook sent for Nettie Theurer, who "had always wanted to be a nurse." Miss Theurer nursed the man back to health, the beginning of a long and useful career as a friend and helper to the sick in Mendota.

At one time rumor was rife that a patient had small pox. It was actually chicken pox, but townspeople were suspicious and frightened. Dr. Cook promptly called a mass meeting and showed pictures of both diseases and explained the difference between the two poxes. A panic was averted.

Once, while attending a formal party, Dr. E. P. Cook was called on an obstetric case. He rushed to the home, still dressed in white tie and tails. He rolled up his sleeves, delivered the baby, and calmly returned to the party.

Along in the late 80's there was talk of converting the old Mendota College building into a hospital, but the plans never materialized.

Not until 1918 did Mendota have a full-fledged hospital, and this was built by the private means of Dr. O. P. Harris. Though operated as a private hospital, it was in reality a community hospital and losses were sustained by Dr. Harris.

## HARRIS HOSPITAL BUILT

When built the Harris hospital, located on Sixth street, was one of the most modern and completely equipped for a town of the size of Mendota. The plans were worked out by Mrs. Harris and her brother, Albert Crisler. The cost was \$50,000 and Mrs. Harris was business manager. Construction work was carried on by Albert and Clarence Crisler. The hospital had 20 beds, and was open to all community physicians and surgeons.

Prior to construction of the hospital Dr. Harris cared for his patients in a house across the backyard from the new hospital. It was equipped with a small operating room, examination rooms, and all other facilities. This stimulated the demand for a modern hospital building.

Operating a hospital alone was a gigantic responsibility. The management cares were great, and it seems unbelievable now in these days of hospitalization that the Harris Hospital ever lacked for patronage. But it is a fact that in 1925 Dr. Harris was losing large sums each year on the hospital. A public appeal was put on to stimulate patronage of the hospital so that it could remain open. Dr. Harris stated frankly that if not used more widely it would have to be closed. This stimulated interest and the public contributed canned foods and other needs so that it could be retained as a community hospital.

Thereafter it became busier and more widely used, to the point that in the late 30's and early 40's it was inadequate, both in size and in equipment, for the demands made upon it. Patients frequently had to wait for rooms, or be hospitalized in the hallways.

## STEPS TOWARD A NEW HOSPITAL

In the late Autumn of 1940 it became apparent that the Harris hospital was showing its inadequacy as to size and modern facilities. Several public-minded citizens of the community became interested in expansion of modern hospital facilities, so that in January, 1941, a committee of representatives of various civic and church organizations, physicians, city officials and businessmen met and discussed the matter. The need for increased and improved hospital facilities in the community became well known and was discussed frequently.

In the early spring of 1941, Dr. Wm. H. Walsh, hospital consultant of Chicago, was asked to conduct a survey of the community as to the need of better hospital facilities. The results of the survey



revealed that the community was indeed in need of a hospital. The committee thought it best to defer action at this time because of the war.

On March 2, 1944, the members of the Mendota Lodge No. 1212, B. P. O. E., recognizing the need for a stimulus, voted the sum of \$30,000, subject to certain definite action being taken within three years after the close of World War II.

With this appropriation, proper means were taken to incorporate a not-for-profit corporation. With this accomplishment the H. D. Conkey & Co., a local industry, expressed their desire to contribute \$10,000 to support the program.

The state charter was received on March 25, 1944; thus the initial step to make a hospital for the community of Mendota a reality.

A corporation, not-for-profit, known as the Mendota Hospital Foundation, had come into being by a petition filed by 17 interested citizens, known as the Incorporators, with the Secretary of State of Illinois.

The organization meeting of the Mendota Hospital Foundation was held on March 30, 1944. L. J. Oester was acting chairman. The main purpose of this meeting was the election of temporary officers.

At this time the temporary officers appointed committees necessary to report with reference to classes of membership, constitution, by-laws and any other matter which might properly be presented at the next meeting. After much discussion it was agreed that an open mind be maintained as to what type of hospital was to be our objective.

The constitution and by-laws of the Mendota Hospital Foundation were adopted April 28, 1944.

R. W. Conkey, J. L. Schaller and O. J. Ellingen, were elected as president, vice-president, and secretary-treasurer, respectively. They served as temporary, then permanent, officers until the annual meeting in April, 1945.

The fund-raising committee was appointed on April 2, 1945. They began work immediately with the aid of some 35 people. Approximately 8,900 pieces of publicity matter, pertaining to needed funds, were mailed to the residents of the community. In August 1945, Mr. Ellingen reported that \$100,000 had been subscribed during the first fund-raising program.

It was the consensus that if an architect and a site committee were appointed and if they would work hand-in-hand in order to present some kind of a sketch in the near future, the fund-raising committee would have a more desirable approach to future contributors.

In January 1945, the firm of Berger, Samuelson and Kelly were

employed to be the architects. The site committee was also at work obtaining possible sites and options on same.

The first annual meeting was held April 27, 1945. The reports showed that there were 1,477 individual subscriptions totaling \$153,380.40, of which \$123,755 had been paid in as of April 1, 1945. There were 527 Life Members, i.e. single contributions of \$100 or more, 766 Annual Members, i.e. single contributions of \$10 or more, and 184 contributors of less than \$10 each.

The following were elected to serve on the board of governors: R. W. Conkey, O. J. Ellingen, J. L. Schaller, for 3 years; Dr. E. C. Cook, Dr. C. O. Harris, and Dr. W. M. Avery, for 2 years; W. G. Van Etten, Jos. L. Zolper, and K. W. Pohl for 1 year.

In September, 1945, the site committee, together with architects, met to secure appropriate sites. The membership voted the Wideman-Walter site, consisting of seven acres, to be the most desirable. This property was purchased at \$1,000 per acre.

What was to be the size of the proposed hospital?—that was the question being asked by everyone in the community.

In November 1945, the Foundation dedicated to the City of Mendota a tract of land, 25' north and south and 650' east and west, along the north boundary of the hospital site, with the stipulation that said tract together with other property to be dedicated by other owners adjacent thereto, shall be henceforth known as Memorial Drive.

The architect was asked to prepare initial plans for a two-story, 50-bed, hospital and submit them by January 15, 1946. It became apparent at this time that it was the intent of the board of governors to have ready by April 1, 1946, plans and specifications for preliminary work, such as sewer, water, grading and landscaping, and ask for bids to have this work completed in the summer of 1946. Also to have building plans and specifications ready for bids in February 1947.

## PLANS DRAWN IN 1946

In January 1946, the initial sketches were submitted. It was agreed to have sketches revised to come within \$225,000 and not over \$250,000 for a completed building less furnishings, even if it were necessary to revise the plans from 50 to 40 beds, with provisions for expansion.

In April 1946, the architects again presented two plans, one of which was the cross-shaped, with cross off center. This plan was most favorable and the cost was less. The bed capacity was 44.

At the second annual meeting, April 1946, the membership authorized the architects to proceed with the plans to complete the foundation and the first floor concrete span, the necessary sewer and water connections and the grading and landscaping.

In July 1946, the architects presented the fifth revised plan calling for a 44 bed hospital, 12 beds and 10 bassinets on the second floor. This plan was approved by the U. S. Department of Public Health and the Illinois Department of Public Health.

In September 1946, the architects presented one complete set of plans and specifications for the foundation and the first floor concrete work and plumbing. Also one enlarged colored drawing of the proposed hospital.

There were hopes of getting Federal and State aid, but these were dimmed because of the wealth in the community.

At the third annual meeting there was \$175,000 on hand.

On April 9th the building was staked out. The Trompeter company was awarded the contract for excavation and grading. Work was started on April 15, 1947.

H. Zolper and Sons were awarded the contract for the concrete work, i.e., the foundation and the first floor concrete slab.

Early in 1948 an additional \$6,000 was raised, but funds were not sufficient to progress with the building.

At the annual meeting in April 1948, it became apparent that building costs were rising and the foregoing program had dragged to the point that the president of the board, R. W. Conkey, felt that there were too many cross-currents that would continue to seriously offset the continuing fund-raising program. The membership voted to have the architects visit a new hospital in Minnesota that had been erected at a cost of \$355,000 and submit revised plans and specifications by January 1949.

On March 11, 1949, the architects submitted a new set of plans and specifications designed to reduce cost to the very minimum, yet providing 32 beds on the main floor and 14 beds and 16 bassinets on the second floor. The basement was to be finished only as it would be necessary to function. The plans also involved using all but a small section of the foundation providing for future expansion.

The architects were instructed to advertise for bids to be received on April 19, 1949.

Details were to be worked out regarding a fund-raising campaign and the potential cost by the secretary, Mr. O. J. Ellingen.

Bids were received June 4, 1949: the general contract, \$217,253; plumbing, \$35,555; heating and ventilating, \$47,600; and electrical,

\$15,176. We learned that we needed \$137,000 to \$200,000 additional before our hospital would become a reality and before the contracts were to be awarded.

At the fifth annual meeting in 1949 there was \$178,400 on hand, in addition to the site, sewer installed, some landscaping and the foundation and footings.

The board was increased to 18 members; one third of whom were to be from outside of the city limits of Mendota. R. W. Conkey resigned and H. D. Hume succeeded him as president of the board.

The directors agreed to raise the additional \$137,000 by personal solicitation.

The contracts were awarded August 2, 1949, and work began shortly thereafter.

On August 15, 1949, the assets were \$283,522. The new finance committee agreed to raise \$100,000 by March 1st 1950. At this time several other committees were appointed. Namely, the building, grounds, medical and non-medical.

The Mendota Lodge of Elks officiated at the laying of the cornerstone on October 2, 1949.

In November 1949, a contract was awarded to enclose the south wing 72 feet of building, less all partitions, finish, floors, plaster, plumbing, heating and electrical work, for the sum of \$16,818.

During the winter of 1950, the work progressed quite rapidly due to a mild winter. All committees were also working to purchase the best equipment for the least amount of money.

In April of 1949, the Foundation again applied for federal aid but was refused. The sixth annual meeting was held in April 1950. The finance committee had raised \$67,000 since November 1949. The Woman's Auxiliary was organized in December 1949. Their membership was 1,800 interested women of the community by April 1950.

The x-ray and sterilization equipment was purchased in April 1950. The structure itself was well under way.

The membership selected a name: The Mendota Community Hospital, as a memorial to all who made the supreme sacrifice in World Wars I and II.

The furniture, laundry and kitchen equipment was ordered in July 1950.

In November and December the sum of \$69,000 was needed but progress was rapidly going on in building and raising the necessary funds. The "Minute Man" campaign was over-subscribed.

In April and May, 1951, the building was opened to visitors on Sundays as an impetus to receive additional funds.



The seventh annual meeting was held in April 1951. The building was 99% complete. The equipment was arriving and being installed daily.

## DEDICATED IN JUNE, 1951

The dedication ceremonies were held on June 10, 1951, and the formal opening was on June 14, 1951. The patients of Harris hospital were transferred via ambulance on the afternoon of June 14. Mrs. De Lois Gallisath and baby girl were the first patients to be transferred from the Harris hospital. John Troupis was the first patient admitted to the new Mendota Community Hospital. At long last our new hospital had become a reality.

In the summer of 1952 it became apparent that the south wing was needed. Plans were made in the fall and winter to complete this wing as soon as sufficient funds became available. Joseph Zolper is in charge of construction.

The finance committee again was recalled with Harry Fahler as chairman, and again raised over \$50,000, plus additional funds for acoustone tile for corridors and ceilings, black topping for parking area and other smaller projects which will make Mendota Community an even finer hospital.

Miss Minnie Smith was the first hospital administrator, succeeded late in 1952 by Miss Elizabeth Schrei.

Though hundreds worked and are working on this project of mercy, the hospital owes much to the guiding genius of the late Otto J. Ellingen.

\* \* \*

The introduction of school nursing activities did not come about until 1935. Several years previously Dr. Edgar C. Cook and W. G. Van Etten urged the idea of a community or school nurse. A full time nurse was employed in 1935 to serve all Mendota schools. Physical examinations for teachers and pupils were approved, and much useful work has been done in health counselling, covering teeth, eyes, diet, and the general physical welfare of the students. Maryland Pope has been the school nurse for a number of years.

Over the years the local board of health has kept a vigilant watch on the purity of the water supply, establishment of a municipal sewage system, sanitation of streets and alleys, and a watch over food and beverage establishments. Quarantines for contagious diseases has

come within the scope of the work of the city physician. Though seldom practiced today, oldtimers remember the compulsory fumigation of homes following cases of communicable diseases and children's diseases. The familiar red card near the door of the home was enough to send peddlers, children, and unwary visitors scurrying away, holding their noses. Vaccinations and other immunization procedures of modern medicine has done away with many of the practices of former years.

Back about 1926 the old brick school building on Fifth street was converted into a maternity hospital, known as the Lewis and Clarke hospital. It operated several years but was finally made into apartments.

After the opening of the new Mendota Community hospital the old Harris hospital was remodeled into a comfortable Lutheran home.

\* \* \*

Other doctors serving Mendota during the past years were Dr. John Leach who received his medical education at the University of Wisconsin medical school. He came to Mendota to practice in February, 1939, being associated with Dr. Edgar C. Cook. In April 1942 he enlisted in the Medical Corps and after his discharge, moved to Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

Dr. George Rathbun practiced in Mendota from 1946 to 1949.

Dr. C. A. Fortier, deceased, practiced in Mendota from 1919 until 1924, moving to Kewanee, Illinois.

\* \* \*

Dr. B. C. Hartford, osteopathic physician, has practiced in Mendota for nearly 32 years. He was graduated from the American School of Osteopathy, Kirksville, Mo.

\* \* \*

Chiropractors now in Mendota are Victor H. Gillogly and Dr. J. E. Stanlaw. For several years Dr. Lois Weber practiced chiropractic here. Dr. Weber is blind, and she went about with the aid of a seeing-eye dog.

\* \* \*

Some of the well-known dentists of the past were Dr. B. N. Hughes, Dr. Edwards, Dr. W. M. Wagner. Dr. Fred Lukens practiced here and left to become a naval dentist. Present practicing dentists are Dr. B. A. Etzbach, Dr. D. H. Mosher, Dr. Homer Hopkins, Dr. W. E. McLaughlin, and Dr. Robert J. Krenz.

## “AND THE WHITE CROSSES, ROW ON ROW”

**P**ROBABLY THE GREATEST celebrities who ever visited Mendota in its 100-year history were President U. S. Grant and Generals William T. Sherman and Phil Sheridan.

The authority for the fact that these immortal military greats were at one time in Mendota is gained from the exciting and delightful memoirs of Mary R. Lawrence, daughter of R. N. Woods whose family formerly lived in Mendota.

The occasion for the visit of President Grant and Generals Sherman and Sheridan was a reception at the Mendota Baptist church. Mrs. Lawrence describes in her memoirs the imposing 6-foot-two-inch height and well proportioned physique of her father, and says:

“President Grant conceded this point, for as father shook Grant’s hand, at a reception tendered the President who was accompanied by Sherman and Phil Sheridan in the Baptist church in Mendota, Grant looked up at father and said: ‘What a fine specimen of a man!’ ”

Then Mrs. Lawrence added, with sly humor, that notwithstanding this compliment her father would not vote for Grant for a third term presidency, thinking it too monarchical.

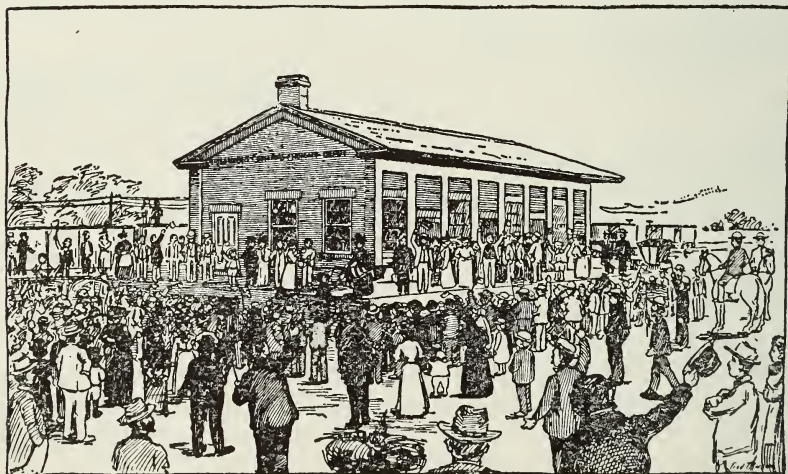
# THE CIVIL WAR

MENDOTA MEN AND WOMEN have taken part in wars during the past century to keep alive the "American Dream". We are the only surviving nation on earth that had its origin in the determination of the founding fathers to establish a settlement "with religious liberty and equal opportunity for all men."

It was this American Dream which prompted a company of around 100 men to be organized in Mendota after Fort Sumter was fired upon by the Confederates April 12, 1861. Patriotism ran high for it seemed to the people of Mendota that the government and Old Glory should be defended at all hazards.

The fife and drum were heard on the streets of Mendota and the company of men was drilled here for several days before leaving for Springfield. It is related that all were rather green in regard to military affairs and it was laughable to see the performance. In fact, there was "as much awkwardness shown as there would be in breaking a pair of young oxen" in those days.

The company left Mendota for Springfield on April 19, 1861, and the excitement in town was beyond description. People came flocking into town from all the surrounding country and villages, with flags flying, to see the soldiers start off for war. The streets were crowded with people who came to bid the soldiers a last good-bye. Flags were unfurled and speeches made in honor of their departure.



Presentation of the Flag at the Freight House.



At 11 o'clock all who had enlisted were formed in two ranks in front of the Illinois Central freight house, facing toward it, when a Miss Davis, who stood upon a raised platform at the northwest corner of the building, delivered an appropriate address, presenting the men with an elegant flag in behalf of the citizens of Mendota. This was responded to in a happy manner in behalf of the company by L. B. Crooker, a chubby farmer boy about 20 years of age who, during the war, was commissioned captain.

About noon the Company of men marched to the depot and the crowd of people bade them farewell as they boarded the train for Springfield. This company became Company B of 12th Illinois Infantry with Col. MacArthur in command, who was later commissioned Major General.

The Mendota company contained more than the required number of men. Among the surplus bone and sinew who found no place in the home company were L. B. Crooker, James W. Larabee, William Eckert, George C. Loomis, S. P. Whitmore and Henry H. Eby, who were determined to stick together and stay in service. They began looking around for an opening large enough to hold six husky farmer boys and it was finally accomplished by entering Company H of the same regiment, the 12th Illinois Infantry. Most of this company was from Tiskilwa, Illinois. The guns received by these companies were of the old kicking variety and could kick equal to a mule, sometimes resulting in lame shoulders.

The hardships endured by soldiers in the Civil war accounted for many deserters and some from the Mendota companies passed through here on their way to a refuge in Canada. One of the Mendota deserters stopped over to see an acquaintance to whom he told these facts. He stated they were armed and determined to die rather than be arrested. An order issued March 28, 1863, regarding deserters stated "those who have been absent from the army in Illinois who give themselves up by April 1 will not be punished. Those who do not will be dealt with in the most vigorous manner provided by law." Undoubtedly, the Mendota men thought better of their rash deed and returned to their regiments.

## BOUNTIES TO LURE VOLUNTEERS

During the latter years of the Civil war bounties were paid to volunteers in order to fill the draft quota. Mendota's draft quota in February, 1865, was to be filled by volunteers. \$12,500 was sub-

scribed in Mendota to pay bounties of \$400 to each volunteer. If not enough volunteers were secured, bounty money was to be pro-rated among drafted men.

During the Civil War Mendota and vicinity figured in the Underground Railway which was the name applied to the system by which the fugitive slaves escaped from the South through the North to Canada. The stations were farmhouses, barns and cribs. Farmers were the conductors and the farmers' horses and wagons were the trains.

The story of underground railroads can best be told in the life story of a man born in slavery who lived in our community and is probably remembered by many of our citizens. He was an old negro whom everybody in and around Mendota respected. Amos Miller was born in slavery in North Carolina, March 4, 1848. Amos grew up to see a lot of scenes about slavery and often saw men and women sold by their masters at sales.

Amos feared being sold or being shipped to Cuba; so he planned to run away. He hid in a grove on his master's plantation for a week because he was afraid his master might find him if he traveled on right away. One day Amos' mother, who had heard that some slaveholders were coming after him, came to the place where he was hiding and put her hand on his head and told him to leave that night, and always to be honest and do what is right.

That night he left his master's plantation and traveled north by way of the underground railway till he came to the Union Army, where he faithfully served as an attendant to an officer. After the war was over he went to St. Louis, later to Centralia and Chicago. In 1877 he came to Mendota where he made his home until his death.

Another story is told of seven negroes of Mendota who enlisted in the government service early in 1864 and started in company with the recruiting officer to Joliet to be mustered in. When they reached La Salle they were set upon by a gang of copperheads and driven out of the city. They started to walk to Mendota, but owing to the cold weather, were nearly frozen to death before reaching here.

\* \* \*

Uncle John and Aunt Fanny were escaped slaves who lived for years in a small cabin at the edge of town. This couple worked out and their employers sent them certain portions of meat whenever a hog was butchered. Another slave family settled near a family named H. S. Clark. These slaves had no surname; so they adopted the name of Clark and when children were born the parents named them after members of the Clark family, an intended compliment.

## HOW PEACE WAS RECEIVED

The news of the end of the Civil war is engagingly related by Mrs. Anna J. Herrick, who now resides in Cleveland Heights, Ohio. In April, 1865, she was nine years old and was with her parents in the Presbyterian church listening to the sermon of the Rev. Colmery. It was a very dull sermon, she thought, but not the event that ensued. Mr. Spear, the local telegrapher, entered the church walking with a crutch. He went up the aisle and handed the minister a yellow envelope. Then the minister read to the congregation: "Richmond has fallen!"

He waited a moment and then said, "we will sing Praise God from Whom All Blessings Flow." He then dismissed the congregation, the women in tears of joy, the men to shout as long as their lung-power lasted. The next night, she relates, every movable piece of wood was burned as the town rejoiced.

During the war, she writes, the women of the city sent all their blankets and comforts enthusiastically to the soldiers, little cognizant that they themselves would need them next winter and that there would be no cotton coming in from the south to make more. They had to resort to the Chicago papers, The Inter-Ocean and Tribune, for newspaper lining to their coats. There was always excitement when the trains came with refugees from the south. Church women prepared food for these refugees.

\* \* \*

Probably the best remembered Civil war veteran in Mendota is Henry H. Eby who served from April, 1861, to October, 1864. He later became author when in 1910 he published his book "Observations of an Illinois Boy in Battle, Camp and Prison — 1861 to 1865."

This book has undoubtedly been read by every boy and girl in Mendota and it is to this author that we are indebted for much of the information regarding the part taken by Mendota people in the Civil war.

Another Civil war veteran well remembered by Mendota people is Edwin A. Bowen who entered the Union Army in 1861 and was captain in 52nd Illinois Infantry. In a period of three years he was promoted to rank of colonel. He later became president of the First National bank of Mendota and was always known as "Colonel Bowen."

The women of Mendota also shared in the war. It was at home that they labored and suffered. The father went to the front and the mother was called upon to care for the children and also to help care for the wounded and sick soldiers. The Mendota Ladies Aid Society

sent a barrel of eggs to sick soldiers at Jefferson Barracks, Mo. At the request of Chicago Sanitary Commission the people of Mendota sent onions, potatoes, pickles, sauerkraut and dried fruit for the hospital fleet near Vicksburg, where the soldiers were suffering from scurvy. The ladies prepared dinners for regiments passing through Mendota on their way to Chicago.

## MOURNING FOR PRESIDENT LINCOLN

When news reached Mendota by telegraphic dispatch that President Lincoln had been assassinated all stores and offices closed. Funeral ceremonies for President Lincoln were held in Mendota, Wednesday, April 19, 1865, when all business was suspended; streets, depot and hotel were draped in mourning.

A procession formed at 2 o'clock led by Marshall Dr. J. M. Hodges and his assistant D. A. Cook, Capt. L. B. Crooker and M. S. Andress, followed by clergymen in carriages, Burkart's brass band and Adam's martial band; hearse drawn by four white horses with fine portraits of deceased president surmounting the hearse, containing a coffin beautifully draped, military commanded by Capt. Shaw; German Benevolent society in regalia, Sons of Temperance and Good Templars in regalia; town authorities, citizens, Seminary students and scholars of public schools.

The procession went up Main street to the post office, around square to Washington street, up Washington street to Seminary, thence to Presbyterian church and from there to the stand on Washington street where the funeral ceremonies were held.

Two men were arrested in Mendota in April, 1865, for disloyal utterances in relation to national bereavement. One was made to take oath of allegiance in public street and released. The other was put in the calaboose and next day was made to take oath of allegiance and given two hours to leave town. He was followed to the depot by a procession of returned soldiers and citizens headed by a martial band playing "Rogue's March". In final disgrace a placard was placed on his back labeled: "A traitor from Mendota".

The scattering numbers in which soldiers returned home from the war made a public reception impossible. Memorial services were held for those who gave their lives for their country, on Decoration Day of 1870. Early in the day delegations commenced arriving in wagons from the neighboring towns. The noon trains also brought a large number of people. Fully 10,000 people came to town, it is said,



but there were no disturbances or serious accidents. The only unpleasantness of the day was the dust.

At one o'clock all stores and business houses were closed and the marshals commenced forming the various societies in procession. First in procession was

### THE MONUMENT

which was 19 feet high consisting of a double base; on the various sides of which were inscribed the names of the 115 soldiers from Mendota and vicinity who died while in their country's service. The list is as follows:

#### Co. B 12th Regiment Illinois Volunteers

Capt. J. Tyler Hale	D. H. Pomroy	John Eckert
Joseph Lee	J. C. Borthé	Jacob Hammerly
Charles Irwin	Thos. Welsh	David E. Jeffs
Wm. Atwood	Wm. Cooper	Alex Marry
Allen Ruffington	James Porter	Edward F. O'Neill
John C. Clink	Fred Weber	Wm. H. Goodrich
Wm. Culver	John Wilsey	Zachariah Melugin
Wm. Cumpston	Jesse F. Hale	Thomas Richy
Henry Doyle	Robert Hale	Wm. Holmona
Mart Messenger	William Bankes	George Cormar
Steven Spencer	Nicholas Coss	Patrick Fitzgerald
		Henry Kneicht

#### Co. C 104 Illinois Volunteers

Capt. D. C. Ryneanson	Thos. Hastings	A. J. Pool
A. J. Grover	J. P. Saueressig	L. W. Clark
Thos. McIntire	David Berkstresser	Isaac A. Foot
James Logan	Wm. Van Law	John A. Cook
Edwin A. Munson	Fred Foot	James W. Pomeroy
Duane M. Harris	Francis Zarr	Wash. C. Parker
James H. Wilson	Hamilton Golden	

#### Co. I 55th Illinois Volunteers

Eli L. Cook	Adam Henline	Michael Rayding
Jesse A. Carpenter	Chas. Lull	Chas. R. Tansey
George W. Crocker	Wm. Nagleschmidt	Ariel D. White

#### Co. E 37th Illinois Volunteers

Capt. Henry L. Smith	Wm. Nestin	Chas. Osmer
Lieut. O. R. Powers	Daniel Savage	Silas Bishop
Thos. Newell	Sendric Sprowl	John A. Bishop
Henry M. Gray	Fred Grossheart	Henry Cories
Isaiah Graffin	Chas. W. Agler	John Lane
John W. Moore	Chas. W. Rust	George Veach
		Wm. Silvertooth

### Co. A 57th Illinois Volunteers

Chas. W. Billings  
Philip Boheler  
Dennis Cooley  
George Hartman  
Clayton Moodey

Philip Moller  
Philip Pontious  
John Sundles  
John Tylor  
John Wray

Samuel Hough  
W. W. Rowin  
Oley Oleson  
Augustine Wicker

### Co. K 75th Illinois Volunteers

Lieut. W. H. Thomson  
Wm. Baisley  
Zora Atherton  
G. L. Button  
Wm. G. Dean  
George Dermay

Jacob D. Fuller  
Jacob Gruss  
Benj. F. Kipp  
Joseph Miller  
Sidney Merriman  
Wm. McIntyre

Francis Mills  
Silas Pringle  
Fletcher Vickey  
C. D. Moodey  
Orson D. George

Over the two bases of the monument rose an obelisk 12 feet in height surmounted by an urn, the whole beautifully draped and decorated by wreaths of evergreens; with four small boys at each corner of the monument dressed to represent the four arms of the service, the infantry, the cavalry, the navy and the artillery. Thus made up, the monument was placed on a draped platform and mounted on wheels, the whole drawn by four white horses. Following the monument came the guard of honor, made up of a company of 24 veterans under command of Lieut. D. A. Andress, which in full uniform, with muskets reversed, escorted the monument to its final destination in the cemetery.

While the procession was being formed, the various church bells in the city were tolled in unison and at two o'clock the column or parade over a mile in length commenced moving in following order:

Monument and Guard of Honor—Approximately 700 soldiers from Mendota and vicinity—Clergy of Mendota and surrounding towns—Light Guard band of Chicago—Knight Templars—Masons—Odd Fellows—Western Union band—German Benevolent society—Good Templars and Cold Water Templars—Martial band—public and private school children—citizens on foot—citizens on horseback and in carriages.

As the procession marched into the cemetery they passed in succession each of the graves of the dead heroes which were decorated with flowers and to the stand where exercises were held.

The streets still being thronged with citizens in the evening the two brass bands played several pieces on the corner of Main and Washington streets and the people assembled in front of the Warner House where addresses were made by Rev. Mr. Haigh, L. B. Crooker and Mr. Wilcox, after which the assemblage was dismissed by Colonel

Bowen, marshal of the day, with a few appropriate remarks in which he referred to the impressive ovation of the day as an evidence of the genuine sympathy and respect of the citizens of Mendota and vicinity for the memories of our noble dead who fell in defense of our country's honor.

In later years a monument was placed in Restland cemetery which is familiar to all of us with the following inscription:

“ERECTED IN MEMORY OF THE HEROES OF THE REBELLION  
1861 - 1865

BY THE WOMEN'S RELIEF CORPS, THE GRAND ARMY OF THE REPUBLIC,  
THE CITIZENS OF MENDOTA AND VICINITY.”

This monument was designed by Henry H. Eby. A neighbor of Mr. Eby's, who lived on a farm east of Mendota near Mr. Eby's farm home, well recalls visiting him one evening in the early 1900's when, in the light of a kerosene lamp and the warmth and glow of a hard coal stove fire, he showed her the miniature wooden carving he had made, after which the monument was patterned.

The G.A.R. organization met regularly in the basement of the Mendota public library for many years. They usually had an annual picnic and were represented at the national and state conventions of the G.A.R. The Women's Relief Corps was also active in Mendota for many years.

## SPANISH-AMERICAN WAR

WHEN PRESIDENT MCKINLEY signed a bill declaring war with Spain April 25, 1898, after the U.S. battleship Maine had been fired upon in Havana Harbor, he asked for 125,000 volunteers from the state governors. Patriotism ran high in Mendota and many of the young men volunteered to protect Old Glory and what it stood for, even though it meant leaving the shores of the USA for the Philippine Islands, Cuba and Puerto Rico.

A story is told of a man sitting near a soldiers monument in a park at that time reading the story of Spanish cruelty in Cuba when one of the soldiers on the monument fell from the pedestal and broke to fragments. The people felt it was time to act when even stone images were thus moved by the tales of Cuba.

Sons of Veterans of Mendota organized a volunteer company and offered their services as a company to the government. All recruits from Mendota were accepted at Springfield and mustered into the U.S. Army. They were sent to Mobile, Alabama, and then on to

the Philippines where they were a credit to themselves, their home, their country and their flag.

One of the few survivors of the Spanish-American war now living in Mendota, is Mr. George Buell who was a member of the National Guard in Red Wing, Minnesota, when the war broke out in 1898. The story of his experiences is interesting. It took his regiment 40 days to reach the Philippine Islands. They did not see land from the time they left the Golden Gate in San Francisco until they were met by one of Dewey's fleet at Manila bay. They were notified that the Spanish fleet was either sunk or burned in Manila bay by Dewey's men without a single American killed or wounded.

The transport landed at Manila and the ten regiments aboard marched a mile and went into camp in a field nearby. The colonel furnished them with bamboo cots. Later they were in trenches for 24 hours and took part in the battle of Manila on August 13, 1898, and were victorious. They were ordered to move into Manila and commence policing it, in capacity of provost guard until enough recruits were trained to relieve them.

\* \* \*

Most of the Mendota men belonged to Company K and an elaborate homecoming was arranged for them on Wednesday, September 21, 1898. Nearly everyone for miles around Mendota came to see the return of these heroes. The business district was decorated with flags. All telephone and electric light poles were wrapped with red, white and blue bunting. Each business house decorated its store. A triumphal arch was erected at the corner of Main and Washington streets.

The train carrying our returned soldiers left Springfield at 6:30 a. m. on that eventful September 21 and as the train moved into Mendota from the south the cannon boomed, whistles blew and bells rang. Cheers rang from thousands of throats, flags waved from a thousand hands, men waved their hats in the air and others were too moved by emotion to even speak.

Company K greeted their families and friends and then marched through ranks of 320 east side school children carrying American flags and baskets filled with flowers as they lined up along Main street in two columns facing each other. Supt. W. R. Foster was in command of this group of children. The Blackstone school children came down Washington street headed by the Mendota band and the German Catholic school children came down Jefferson street led by John Goedtner. The soldiers were greeted by these children, proceeded through the triumphal arch down Washington street to the Opera House where a banquet was spread, prepared and served by Mendota ladies.



# WORLD WAR I

WHEN THE UNITED STATES officially entered World War I on April 6, 1917, the news spread in Mendota like wildfire. This conflict had been raging among other nations since 1914 and now involved every continent. In sheer magnitude this struggle of 1914 to 1918 dwarfed every one that had gone before.

Almost immediately Mendota's young men offered their services and three doctors, Dr. J. C. Corbus, Dr. C. E. Cook and Dr. O. P. Harris, responded to the call by joining the Reserve Medical Corps.

Mendota township organized a Recruits Welfare association whose object was to aid men who were drafted into service or who enlisted. A recruiting office was opened with headquarters at the Northwestern Timber Company office next to the old post office. The Recruits Welfare league of Mendota planned many farewell receptions for men about to leave for the army and on one such occasion the famous Peter Billhorn, singing evangelist of Chicago, came to Mendota to sing for the boys and citizens of Mendota.

On May 31, 1917, the first two boys from Mendota enlisted in the army—Walter Beitsch and Ed March. They were sent to Jefferson barracks and many of their friends were at the depot to bid them goodbye and wish them luck and courage wherever duty called them.

The selective service bill became effective and required that all men and boys between the ages of 21 and 30 register. June 5, 1917, was the date set for Mendota's registration and much patriotism was displayed. Four hundred and fourteen men registered in Mendota township.

By late June draft boards were named and September 13, 1917, the first three men drafted from Mendota left for camp. They were Otto Krenz, Frank Barrett and Carl Spenader.

The folks at home were anxious to do their bit and raised \$565 for Y.M.C.A. work among boys who would be called to the front. A Red Cross society was organized and many Mendota women well remember knitting socks, mittens, scarfs and other clothes for the soldiers at the front.

By June 21, 1917, \$78,500 in Liberty Bonds were sold in Mendota and almost every child was buying thrift stamps to help our government conduct the war. This spontaneous response showed the patriotic spirit of the people.

About 300 men from Mendota served their country in World War I. It is said that despite the fact that Mendota had a heavy population of German descent, the city had the largest percentage of volunteer

enlistees of any community in the county. We also had several women who joined the Red Cross and served as nurses or otherwise in France, including Gertrude Fluehr and Faith Denison.

With so many of our boys overseas it was not uncommon to hear people on the street asking each other, "Have you heard from Bill or John 'over there', meaning somewhere in Europe. Songs such as "Over There", "Smiles", "Till We Meet Again", and "Keep the Home Fires Burning" were heard wherever folks gathered.

## BENEFIT FAIR IS STAGED

We cannot forget the big fair staged by the Mendota Red Cross society in May of 1918. The net receipts of this project were around \$6,000 and was typical of Mendota citizens putting their shoulders to the wheel when a job had to be done.

Mendota was highly honored at this fair when the wife of President Woodrow Wilson sent a beautiful handkerchief from the executive mansion with her card accompanying the gift and a nice letter for the success of the fair. Mrs. Frank Lowden, wife of the governor, donated a beautiful knitting bag and a set of ivory tipped knitting needles. Mr. McColl, auctioneer, had the Democrats bid on the handkerchief which brought \$83. Not to be outdone the Republicans bid on the knitting bag and needles and the sum of \$200 was realized from these articles.

A leather glove case was donated by Carrie Jacobs Bond and sold for \$50.

After the long, weary 18 months of warfare, came that eventful Armistice day, November 11, 1918. At an early hour on that Monday morning it was learned that Germany signed an armistice and the terrible war was over. At 4 a. m. the people of Mendota were awakened when the whistles broke loose and everyone heard the good news. People hurriedly dressed and came down town where the girls' drum corps had already assembled and, under the leadership of Alderman Knauer, a parade was formed which was over several blocks in length and residence and business streets were paraded. There were all sorts of noise making instruments in the procession and great joy was shown along the line of march. It was about 7 o'clock when the happy band dispersed.

The fire whistles and locomotive engines coming through town kept up a continual din. The whistle at the waterworks was worn out

that day and the old whistle had to be attached to an air compressor to finish out the celebration.

The schools were to open, but after the children gathered and a patriotic program had been carried out the pupils were dismissed and paraded the streets. There were continual parades and the band was out all day playing patriotic music. The drum corps also did a good day's work.

\* \* \*

A mammoth crowd came to town that evening. A big parade was staged with the fire department in the lead, followed by hose wagon and hook and ladder. Next came the band, members of G.A.R., drum corps, followed by a number of soldiers who were in the city at that time, members of lodges and citizens. The Kaiser and Crown Prince were fittingly made up in dummies, carried in coffins by pallbearers who did not seem to wear a very sad expression on their faces. The Kaiser found his last resting place in a huge bonfire on south Main street.

## SEVEN GAVE THEIR LIVES

Seven men from Mendota made the supreme sacrifice in World War I, namely

George Brown

Earl Cummings

William Frey

Earl Garard

John Madden

Edward E. March

Harry Weigand

We can never forget these heroes of World War I. To commemorate their sacrifice a memorial was placed in the Mendota city park by the Mendota Post No. 540 American Legion, in 1921. It is a fountain monument with a plate bearing the names of the seven men who lost their lives in World War I. A tree was also planted in the city park for each of these men with a marker and small flag commemorating the lives of the Mendota Gold Stars in World War I.

Mendota has had a large active American Legion post and auxiliary during the many years since World War I. It is said the Post was the biggest in the county relative to population.

## WORLD WAR II

MEMORIES OF WORLD WAR II are very vivid in the minds of most of the citizens of Mendota today. Sunday, December 7, 1941, the zero hour, the day the Japanese made a sneak attack on Pearl Harbor, will not soon be forgotten. Everyone stayed close to their radios on that eventful Sunday afternoon and evening to hear the latest news on the Pearl Harbor attack.

Several Mendota servicemen were members of the U.S. fleet and aviation groups stationed at Hawaii. Ensign John J. Westerman Jr. was a member of the crew on the battleship Maryland which was stationed in Pearl Harbor at the time of the attack.

More than 100 young men from Mendota and vicinity were already members of the U.S. fighting forces.

Real patriotism caused many of the young men of Mendota to sign up immediately at the Mendota post office where a recruiting officer from Aurora was meeting those who desired to join the army or navy. There was no time for farewell parades and receptions as the boys were hurriedly accepted and sent to camps to start training.

The civilian defense committee which had been organized in Mendota was ready to aid the police, fire department and local medical organizations in case of disaster.

The defense program called for everyone to register. December 18, 1941, around 1,000 men, women and high school pupils voluntarily registered for defense work with the Civilian Defense council, which signified willingness of Mendota people to serve wherever and whenever their training and ability was needed in the community.

An auxiliary police corps was organized to cope with emergencies as well as to guard highways, bridges and viaducts during troop movements or convoys of army supplies over local highways.

An auxiliary Fire Department was formed and trained to handle chemical, fires or explosions, and to guard against fire hazards. A medical and nurse corps was organized and training in First Aid and prevention of disease was carried on.

There was a big demand for sugar and flour everywhere after the Pearl Harbor attack. People bought big orders of groceries and many apparently laid in a supply of foodstuffs. All this finally led to the rationing of many items and most of us remember coping with rationing stamps for food, gasoline, etc.

A Red Cross society was quickly organized in Mendota and the work carried on at Red Cross centers where bandages were rolled, sewing was done and various kinds of jobs completed. When Presi-



dent Roosevelt asked the Red Cross to raise \$50,000,000, Mendota's quota of \$2,200 was quickly raised.

## FACTORIES AID WAR PRODUCTION

Local factories greatly aided war production as follows:

H. D. Conkey & Company made a reel for the signal corps. Men carried this reel to lay communication wire along front line areas. H. D. Conkey & Co. outfitted 100 trucks with hoisting mechanism for the Marine corps. These trucks were used for pulling in damaged tanks and landing barges on beaches. They made five different styles of cans for Marine corps, Engineer corps and Quartermaster corps. These were used for carrying gasoline, oil and water. Conkey's were one of the major producers of these cans and production reached around six million cans. They made a cartridge storage case for 155 mm howitzers, in contract with the Chicago Ordnance district. They were the first ones to make this particular container and approximately two million were made. The regular line of Conco cranes, trolleys and hoists were very much in demand from standpoint of outfitting war production plants. The army and navy also used many of them in docks and army camps.

During World War II, H. D. Conkey & Company employed three shifts—up to 800 men and women. They also did considerable amount of development work on cans and R. W. Conkey served on an industry committee acting in advisory capacity to the armed services and he continues to serve at the present time.

The Conco organization was honored with an "E" award in an impressive ceremony.

\* \* \*

Considerable equipment for use in the manufacture of wartime and defense items was made in the plant of Black Brothers company for the woodworking industry. This company designed and manufactured the machines that prepare and blend the various glues and resins used in wood laminations, as well as clamps, presses, and other equipment needed to complete these parts.

Plywood and veneer laminations were used in many fields, and included timbers used for structural purposes as well as in shipbuilding and bridgebuilding. World-wide acceptance was given their equipment. The quality and accuracy of the products gave them capacity

to perform without break-downs month after month under the most severe production programs.

There were many important users in the aircraft field, including such names as General Motors, Hughes Aircraft, Boeing Airplane company, Higgins Aircraft, Goodyear, Curtis-Wright, and others. Black's machines were used in the manufacture of fuselages, propellers, wings, and many other plane parts.

Black's equipment in World War II as well as in the current defense program, has been high on the list of essential equipment for producing the fighting material for army, navy, and air force. Rigid government specifications call for plywood ship keels, minesweepers constructed entirely of wood, mess tables, helicopters and other items laminated out of wood stock bound together with waterproof adhesives.

The following is quoted from an article by one of Black Brothers' executives: "However, we are hoping that our machines will be used more for creative rather than destructive manufacturing processes in the near future. The outlook is encouraging as laminating has been found to be one of the best methods of giving the public what it wants."

\* \* \*

The J. D. Tower Company made several items for wartime use, the principal one being a specially designed hemp harvesting machine. There were several hemp mills in this area, and many acres were devoted to the raising of hemp in order to achieve a national source of the materials for rope without depending on foreign manufacture.

## 615 SERVED THEIR COUNTRY

There were around 600 men and 15 women from Mendota and vicinity who served their country well in World War II. The "Community Service Honor Roll" which was placed at the north end of our city park during the war was a constant reminder to all of us what they were doing for their country.

Twenty-one of our boys made the supreme sacrifice. They are:

Arthur L. Brown  
Frank Leslie Canavit  
Howard Cromwell  
Bernard R. Coss  
Irwin W. Dial  
Richard Lyle Durham  
Dennis A. Edwards  
Clarence C. Fitzgerald  
Glenn Flanagan  
Paul R. Heffner  
William T. Herbert

Emery R. Hill  
Warren Lee Krause  
Eugene D. Kuhre  
Richard Delmar Lathrop  
Delbert W. Marcum  
Robert Mc Cullough  
Wilbur Meisel  
Joseph Wm. Schmidt  
Dixon Frederick Steele  
William Yard

The end of World War II was not celebrated with as much hilarity in Mendota as the end of previous wars. D-day and V-day were solemn days. Services were held in the city park during the morning hours and church services were held in the evening.

The Veterans of Foreign Wars and Navy Mothers are two organizations that grew out of World War II and both groups are strongly organized in Mendota.

\* \* \*

We cannot bring this chapter to a close without mentioning the present Korean struggle where scores of our Mendota boys are serving their country in Korea and elsewhere. One of them, Jack Shanyfelt, has made the supreme sacrifice.

Hundreds have enlisted in the various branches of the armed forces and countless others from age 20 and up are drawn into military duty through Selective Service. Some with reserve status, including women, were sent back into duty.

In reading the war history of Mendota during the past 100 years we are reminded that "eternal vigilance is the price of liberty", and so the "American Dream" is kept alive and we are privileged to live in the "World's Greatest Little City".





## FIRE AND FALL BACK: THE SECOND 50 YEARS

THE NEXT 50 YEARS were to be years of transition. Physical changes, yes, but, more important, a change in temperament. The original Mendota was dying — behind now was much of the bold and bawdy; ahead lay the task of reaping the harvest, of replanting the old seed with sturdy, lasting stock.

Even in 1900 the change was becoming apparent. Stores now closed at 6 p.m.; no more after-supper work hours except on the farms and in specialized businesses. Electric lights were replacing the gas jets and oil lamps.

The owners of high old walnut beds were eyeing the shiny new brass models; the old rosewood square piano gave way to a fine upright model.

Grandmother's old hair cloth sofa went to the attic; in its place came the golden oak settee, with matching rocking chair. A library table became a "must", if for no other reason than to support an art glass electric lamp. Rooms were separated by portiers, wall paper shaped into long beads, then painted with shellac to prevent tearing. "Mission" style furnishings were here to stay. . .for a while, that is.

The woman of fashion (and what woman was not?) made and wore rose beads. Rose petals were collected, mixed, shaped into little round balls and strung on hatpins until dry and ready for stringing on thread.

A curfew law was passed, forbidding children the use of the

streets after 8 p.m. in winter and 9 p.m. in summer. A whistle announced the zero hour.

Interest in the new horseless carriage, at first merely passing, generated into a desire to possess, and by 1907 the first streets were being paved.

And, as the decade rolled on, the wooden sidewalks were gradually removed from the business district and replaced with cement. This came as a blow to the children who had formerly crawled under the boardwalks to retrieve nickels and dimes which had rolled through the cracks.

In 1910, the population was 3,806; the days of rapid growth were gone.

A new subdivision was added to the city in 1913. Lots on the west side of 13th Avenue north of Washington Street were placed on sale. The bungalow was in high favor, and all the fine houses being erected in "New Addition" were of this style architecture.

## "DO WHAT YOU DO"

Thirty-two students were graduated from Mendota High School in 1914, exercises being held at the Princess Theater. The stage was effectively decorated with ferns and a large rubber plant; at the back of the stage was a large pennant carrying the class motto: "Do what you do." Less-inspired messages were imprinted on other smaller pennants about the stage.

The businessmen sponsored a picnic at Glen Park, a currently favored spot with cottages to rent, boating on the river, and a dance pavilion. The picnic crowd gathered at the depot, 391 strong, with the Mendota band furnishing farewell music as the train departed.

En route to the grounds, the train stopped in Earlville long enough for a Mendota parade, led by Alderman Rudolph Witte, to disrupt that community's business for the day.

Some traveled to the gala affair by automobile, and made better time than the train. Approximately 250 were conducted in this fashion in 50 cars.

Highlight of the day was a close ballgame between the merchants of Illinois avenue and Jefferson street. The threat of a thunderstorm broke up the festivities early, but all were home before the rains came.

\* \* \*

The Ladies Musical Band was organized in 1916 and trained by a conductor imported from — pardon the expression — Princeton.

And the long-hoped for Mendota Township High School was to be a reality. The first step was the selling of the old Advent college building for \$250. This was a small price even in those days but the owners had little choice. The second high bid was \$50, while one bidder had the audacity to offer to tear it down and remove it if the owners would give him \$400.

And the livery stables were going, the various conveyances selling for rock-bottom prices. A vehicle which had carried ministers to funerals, originally bought for \$200, was sold for \$19.

## OVER THERE AND OVER HERE

And it was war time again for the nation. The theme: "The war to end all wars." The Mendota chapter of the Red Cross was organized in June, 1917, with R. N. Crawford, chairman; George D. Tower, vice chairman; J. R. Woods, treasurer, and Harriet McIntire, secretary.

Victory gardens sprouted up all over town; a large community garden occupied the lots where Widmer's garage now stands.

A spectacular three-day bazaar was conducted in the building now housing Brown's Feed Store, with the prize auction pieces being a handkerchief donated by Mrs. Woodrow Wilson, wife of the President, and a knitting bag given by Mrs. Frank O. Lowden, wife of the Republican Governor of Illinois.

Liberty bonds were placed on sale. Just before the drive ended, bells were rung each evening at 9 p.m., Monday through Thursday. The bells were to be tolled four times on Monday, thrice on Tuesday, twice on Wednesday and once on Thursday, reminding the citizenry of the number of days remaining in the bond drive.

People were asked to fill *Sammy comfort kits* to be sent to the boys in the armed forces. Included in the kits were khaki cotton thread, five needles, 30 extra buttons, thimble, shaving mirror and a pocket aluminum drinking cup.

And there were taxes to worry about. A five cent war tax was placed on phone calls or telegrams costing more than 15 cents; 10 per cent on club dues exceeding \$12 per year, and one cent on each 20 cent express charge.

But not all activity was centered on the war: there was a bird club, with dues of 50 cents for adults and 15 cents for children. The object? "To protect birds which are useful and destroy the sparrow which drives away the other birds."

*November 11, 1918.* What a day in Mendota! Schools were dismissed and students dispatched to the business district where they formed a huge line and snake-danced through the town for hours. The day was climaxed with the burning of the Kaiser in effigy at a funeral pyre on the railroad right-of-way on South Main across from the Feik Coal office.

## DECADENT DECADE

And now — the roaring '20s. Mendota was to start the decade with a population of 3,934 and end with a population of 4,008.

These were the days when the girls wore pleated skirts and middy blouses topped by three-cornered ties, of black, red, or blue. High button and laced shoes were out; oxfords and woolen hose in.

And to call Madame's hair a "rat's nest" was a compliment. The most fashionable hairstyle was called "cootie garages", made by snarling and stuffing the hair with rats and combing over the ears.

Perhaps because this became a little uncomfortable on hot summer days, the flapper era was coming in fast, and the girls bobbed their hair severely. They wore fancy black underwear called "teddies." Dresses were of the chemise type with waists dropping to the hips and skirts raised to knee level. The very chic wore cloche styled hats and carried vanity bags. The well-dressed college girl joined her brother in donning raccoon coats and four buckles galoshes, the latter worn open so they would flap and the buckles would jangle.

This was the decade of prohibition and speakeasies, of the big fight between fundamentalism and modernism. Washington scandals, then as now, formed good conversation fodder. And the proximity of Chicago and its hoodlum empire was not always reassuring.

All Illinois claimed and loved Red Grange, the Illini gridiron star, perhaps the first football hero to attain such dizzy heights of adulation. Football junkets to Champaign were not uncommon.

In such erotic times, perhaps it did not seem at all strange that the next national hero was to be a "birdman" — Charles E. Lindbergh. The automobile had been hard to take; now — the airplane? Perhaps most thought it a fool's invention, but how they loved Lindbergh and his courageous solo flight.

In 1929, people worried over high prices — like butter at 40 cents a pound, eggs at 30 cents a dozen, hogs at 8½ cent per pound. It was the "silk shirt era"; a dollar bought three pounds of coffee, a



16 oz. loaf of bread cost a nickel, and 15 pounds of potatoes went for 27 cents. The Ford coupe was priced at \$550; the roadster \$290.

An advertisement in the *Reporter*: "Team of Bay Geldings 10 and 11 years old for sale or will trade for cows."

And the movies billed Dolores Costello in "Glorious Betsy". Other movie favorites were Valentino, Pickford, Fairbanks and Francis X. Bushman.

There were still, however, remainders of the past: for example, a harness shop run by Fred Reiter.

\* \* \*

Fast on the heels of the "roaring '20s" came the "Threadbare '30s" (which expression we owe to Groucho Marx, a still popular radio and movie comedian).

Crime was still running rampant through the country, one of the most popular criminal pasttimes being car theft. One Monday evening two cars were stolen from the streets of Mendota; every issue of the papers told of new car thefts.

Slot machines were much in the news; the mayor and aldermen campaigned against them; occasionally bandits would steal the one-armers and their enclosed treasures.

Garden lovers made a yearly spring pilgrimage to Katzwinkel's green house to see the daffodils in bloom. He had received and planted two carloads of bulbs; his greenhouse was a place of beauty.

## CAME THE CRASH

Early in 1932 the crash came. The directors of the Farmers and Merchants State Bank closed its doors for the protection of depositors; the mayor declared a six day moratorium with all banks and stores to remain closed, but heavy withdrawals forced a decision to permanently close the Mendota National and First National Banks.

On the 24th day of May, 1932, Miss Ellen Meisenbach, the first white child born in Mendota, died. In a few more years all those connected with the first years would be gone.

The Fourth of July celebration was held at Kakusha Park; Mendota and Scarboro, tense rivals, engaged in a baseball contest. There were amateur vaudeville acts, with \$30 in prizes awarded to the best. The Golden Ramblers provided music for dancing. Mendotans brought their lunches and stayed all day.

The Elks Auditorium featured movies. Among the "hits" of the year was "The Rich are Always with Us", starring Ruth Chatterton,

which was accompanied by a two-reel musical revue, "A Subway Symphony." Admission was 10 and 25 cents. Tuesdays and Wednesdays were family nights with all seats going for 10 cents.

Double-dip ice cream cones sold for a nickel. A fireman's tournament at Puritan Park was attended by 5,000, more than the population of the city.

In September the Mendota Red Cross received a carload of flour to be distributed to the needy in Mendota, Troy Grove, Triumph and Earlville. The Needlework Guild, an organization of women who had earned praise during the war years sewing, knitting, making surgical dressings and caring for the poor, also helped during depression years, collecting 1,140 articles of clothing for distribution to the needy.

The Red Cross imported more flour early the next year; the winter was bitterly cold, and 202 families were on relief. In February, the thermometer registered 31 degrees below zero.

The city decided upon a license fee of \$100 a year for beer vending.

\* \* \*

The first La Salle County flower show, sponsored by the Mendota Women's Club, was held in the Lincoln school auditorium.

On the Fourth of July the Mendota Elks and the Mendota Post of the American Legion honored John Bellinghausen, the only surviving Civil War veteran in the city.

The Cavell Brothers meat market, in business since 1878, ceased business a few weeks later.

Kittenball games were the feature attraction three or four evenings during each summer week.

The grub worms heavily damaged the corn crop; the Fair Association announced that there would be no fair for Mendota in '33. But one of Mendota's progressive farmers had a Poland China gilt chosen to be shipped to an agricultural experimental station in Japan.

Troy Grove celebrated its Centennial, with 7,500 attending the pageant.

## CENTURY OF PROGRESS

The *Century of Progress* continued in Chicago, with the Burlington offering special round-trip rates of \$1.70 from Mendota to the city. Mendota's Gladys Lamberton played in the Marimba band at the fair. The Royal Scot passenger train, one of the Fair's exhibits, passed through the city, and a large crowd surrounded the depot during its

stay. The beautiful Chicago spectacle was a welcome diversion and conversation topic in these grim days.

In June, the Burlington Railroad began exhibiting its new and different train — "The Zephyr." It was brought to Mendota and inspected by 2,793 persons. Mendota businessmen were carried on a trial run to Earlville.

The automobile and truck had come to stay. In a period of five days, 24,312 vehicles passed the intersection of 13th and Washington. The city sold 1,000 wheel tax stickers to car owners.

## DEPRESSION DIVERSIONS

The first social event of 1934 was the President's Ball, with 250 citizens turning out. Soon afterward, a community supper was held to raise funds for the Fair Association. The supper was accompanied by a vaudeville show and a dance, with \$135 realized and turned over to the association.

The Red Cross continued to send in supplies for the needy; 1,000 pounds of pork and 3,000 pounds of flour were imported early in the year.

A Rifle and Pistol club was organized, utilizing a 50-foot range in the basement of Chamberlin's (now Yohn's) Dry Goods store. The Mendota club maintained a hot rivalry with the LaMoille Rifle club.

More slot machine trouble was reported; a Mendota alderman removed all slot machines from local business houses.

There was talk of putting in a subway under the "Q" tracks on 13th; as usual, a great deal of talk was to precede the act.

The most popular movie stars of the day were Will Rogers, Marie Dressler, Wallace Beery, and Shirley Temple, the latter being a child star who was the envy of every ambitious mother.

The farmers had a bad season, the chinch bug destroying the small grain crop and almost the entire corn crop. Pastures were so short that cattle were pastured along the highway. The drought was serious, perhaps the worst in the city's history.

1935, and more slot machines; this time the city council ordered the removal. The subway was still being discussed by engineers.

On Tuesday, January 21, John Bellinghausen, Mendota's last Civil War veteran, died at the age of 88.

Peru celebrated her Centennial, and Mendota selected a Queen to represent her in the Centennial parade.

The W.P.A. (one of the first of many government "alphabet"

agencies) allocated \$45,036 to construct a park and make a lake fit for swimming out of the Railroad Pond property. The lake held 17,000,000 gallons of water, and was referred to by the staunch Republicans around town as "Lake Eleanor."

Another government relief agency was the C.C.C. (Civil Construction Corps) which announced 72 vacancies, and received 200 applications.

\* \* \*

Times continued hard; 157 baskets were distributed to the needy at Christmas.

The Mendota police earned \$90 a month; the chief received \$100. Service stations engaged in a gas price war, lowest price being 8½ cents plus 4 cents tax per gallon.

The government built galvanized granaries to hold the corn the farmers sealed; Mendota had 12 such granaries holding 2,400 bushels of sealed corn. Eighty per cent of the farmers in this area sealed their corn in 1939.

The summer of 1939 brought the city a beguiling mystery. A weird, dancing light was reported in the fields near a graveyard west of Sublette. Just before dark, families would load up their cars and drive out to see the still unexplained phenomena. Some spoil sports suggested that the cause of the elusive light was swamp gas; the superstitious hoped for a more supernatural explanation.

Now that the dreary '30s were almost over, the depression was nearly forgotten, and the country was gearing itself for a new global conflict. Mendota experienced a building boom; 16 homes were under construction, many of them still of the modified bungalow type.

That year Mendota's well-loved first grade teacher, Miss Rose Weidner, resigned as teacher at old Blackstone school after 38 years of starting Mendota children through school.

1939 was also the year of the Mendota Creek flood.

On September 13, the big floodlights were turned on the Mendota Township High School's Athletic field, with 1,800 people attending the ceremony and watching Mendota's Trojans top Depue 13-0, an auspicious under-the-lights opener.

## MENDOTA GETS THE BIRD

The 1940 census revealed a population of 4,215 people. The census taker, however, neglected to count a startling population of crows, blackbirds and starlings. During the bird season the west



side of town became a center of strange sights and weird noises as the citizens tried out various bird-removing procedures.

Women would clap together two pieces of wood; one was seen beating on an old preserving kettle with a heavy trowel, but the din seemed to annoy the neighbors more than the birds. Guns were fired by the men; trees were wired with blinking lights.

Live owls were imported from the country, as they were reported to consider blackbirds a delicacy. Unfortunately, however, the owls weren't exactly silent themselves.

A subterfuge was found in two-faced aluminum owls which were set in trees and undoubtedly managed to scare a goodly number of children without having any effect on the birds.

The only answer to the bird problem was to cut trees, and many, unfortunately, did have to be destroyed.

The climax came one late summer night with the sudden reverberation of a loud explosion. The telephone wires hummed: what was it? It was the death of 2,000 crows roosting in the evergreen trees north of the cemetery, killed by bombs set off by the state.

\* \* \*

*The* movie of the year was made from *the* book of the last five: "Gone with the Wind", with Vivien Leigh as Scarlett O'Hara, that most desirable of Southern belles, and Clark Gable as Rhett Butler, the romantic scoundrel who put her in her place. Another favorite, especially for the children, was Walt Disney's first cartoon feature, "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs."

Two favorite sons returned home for speaking engagements in 1941: Fritz Crisler, guest speaker at the athletic banquet, and Judge John Gutknecht, speaker at the Alumni banquet.

## REMEMBER PEARL HARBOR?

And then December 7, the day which President Franklin Roosevelt said would "live in infamy." The world was at war again. It was not completely unexpected, as both Asia and Europe had been engaged in conquest and battle, and the United States had already begun selective service.

But, now, it was reality. The boys were off to camps and soon overseas. First aid classes were conducted by the Red Cross; all branches of the Mendota Chapter of the Red Cross were busy daily. A Civil Defense unit was organized with William Ashley as chief air raid warden; the town carried out successful blackouts; training for the day when it *might* happen here.

The city was left with only three practicing physicians, a critical situation. The three doctors worked night and day to care for the sick in the area.

\* \* \*

Girls affected the short skirts, sweater styles, and long hair-dos of "Pin-Up" movie queens Betty Grable and Lana Turner.

The top movie of the war years was "Going My Way", with its emphasis on faith; the song everyone sang was Irving Berlin's "White Christmas". The top entertainer of the period was Bing Crosby, who was associated with both.

Before price ceilings went into effect, the cost of haircuts was raised from 40 to 50 cents. Reason: So many young men were being inducted into the army that business had fallen off, and the raise was necessary to offset the decrease in volume.

Cars were rationed; the school nurse in Mendota was the first to have a rationed automobile.

The *Reporter* carried a weekly ration calendar. Typical is the following for the week starting May 27, 1943:

**Red stamps E F G N & J valid this week for meat,  
fats, canned fish and meat, and cheese.**

**E F G & H expire this weekend.**

**May 30 last day for coffee coupon 23 in No. 1 book.**

**May 31 last day for sugar coupon 12**

**June 15 last day to buy shoes with coupon 17**

**July 21 last day for using A 6 stamp for gasoline.**

And housewives would stand in queues, clutching a number, hoping that soap, bananas, cigarettes, nylon hose, Jello, or other scarce items would hold out until their numbers were called.

Women exchanged recipes for cakes made of packaged puddings, in an effort to stretch their tiny hoards of rationed sugar.

A selfish few hoarded scarcities, but soon found that it was one way to become a social outcast.

The production corps of the Mendota Red Cross presented an exhibit at the Elks explaining its expenditures. The tables were piled high with knitted garments, hospital shirts, pieced lap robes for wheel chair patients, surgical dressings and many other articles.

And with all the war work a group of Mendotans began to talk of a hospital for the city. A fund was started.

The fifth war loan bond was initiated in April, 1944. That year Mendota had a community canning center; they read in the *Reporter*

the letters of men and women overseas, of casualties and men missing in action.

A short war had been predicted at the beginning, but as the years rolled on it seemed it would never end. Perhaps no Christmas ever seemed so empty as that of the Battle of the Bulge.

But now strange new names become familiar to every Mendotan — names like *Iwo Jima*, *Kwajalean*, the *Solomons*, names which spelled an ever-approaching victory. Yes, and *Anzio*, *El Alamain*. Then the 8th of May, 1945, and V.E. Day. Only one enemy remained to be defeated, and that defeat now appeared certain. But Roosevelt, our wartime commander, had died before the end came.

## “V” FOR VICTORY

Then one morning a new geographic location occupied the headlines of every newspaper, and men and women alike looked heavenward in awe. *Hiroshima*: a trick of fate, weather conditions, made this devastated city the signal for the end of one era and the beginning of a new one. On August 14, shortly after the dropping of the second Atomic Bomb, the war ended. That evening there were parades again, in and out of town, but this time a parade of cars from which war-weary people tossed serpentine and confetti.

With the last Sunday in September came the end of “war time”, a year-round form of “Daylight Saving Time” which had been in effect since February 1942.

Every day now men were coming home and the town experienced a new housing shortage. Large homes were converted into apartments. Homes put up for sale brought high prices. A seven room brick dwelling built during the bungalow era for \$7,000 brought \$15,000 at auction. Even the third floor of old Blackstone school, unused for years, was converted into an apartment for one of the instructors who was unable to find accommodations elsewhere.

A new civic organization, the Mendota Homes Corporation, was formed, erecting a group of 10 homes for ex-G.I.s to buy.

Mendota now referred to itself as the “world’s greatest little city.” But the world’s greatest little city had a problem: automobile parking, a headache for several years.

Mendota’s first Annual Sweet Corn Festival was held in 1949, a new promotion stunt. A queen was crowned, there was a parade of sorts, free attractions, and, the real draw, all the free sweet corn the 20,000 people attending could eat.

The lighting problem came in for discussion; new street lights were needed downtown. \$34,000 was allocated for street improvement. Some of the old narrow streets were widened and resurfaced.

The city took on a more cosmopolitan air; a number of displaced persons from war-ravaged Europe were brought to Mendota under the displaced persons plan, and soon found their places in our community life.

The water problem came to a head in 1949. Water came out of the taps rusty and muddy; angry citizens turned to the State Department of Health for help. The city maintained the water was fit for drinking and the housewives said they couldn't do a decent washing. The state reported that the water was safe for drinking but suggested an iron removal treatment.

Now the century was half gone and the markers at the city limits read 5,129. New industry had shot the population up past the five thousand mark.

Meriden Street, closed since the 1945 flood, was reopened to traffic.

The gambling situation was again discussed at council meetings.

On Easter Sunday, Mendota was struck by the worst sleet storm in its history. Streets and lawns were littered with debris, fallen branches and limbs. The town was without telephone and electric service for several days. The wires were no sooner repaired than a severe rain and electrical storm hit the town, and all the work had to be redone.

The city adopted Daylight Saving time.

## BLACKSTONE OPEN HOUSE

June 18 was open house at Old Blackstone school, whose days now were numbered. Old friends greeted here, realizing that progress demanded replacement of the school with a modern structure but regretting that the old red tower would soon be crumbled to the ground.

The Wixom Country school was moved to a permanent location at the fairgrounds so it could be preserved for posterity. The Country school house was rapidly becoming a thing of the past as school buses carried children from rural areas into one of the town schools. Carpenters built on the old Wixom school a small bell tower and in this tower the bell from Blackstone tower was installed.



Everyone talked of flying saucers; the newspapers were filled with accounts of people who thought they had seen them. So the Mendota merchants had a flying saucer sale day; 3,000 paper plates were dropped over the town and country side from airplanes in this unique promotion stunt.

## THE WAR NO ONE WANTED

A Sunday morning in June brought shocking news: war in Korea. Apparently we had fought two "wars to end all wars" in vain.

Mobilization began again for what was to be one of the most discouraging wars of our country's history. Some attempt was made to dignify the drastic happenings in Korea by referring to it as a "police action"; to the troops, so short a time home from the last war, there could be no such neat distinction.

Mendota was to have new street lights, and a contract was awarded.

Early in 1951 a petition for a local option liquor vote was filed for the township election in April. The Township elected to stay "wet" by a big majority.

The local telegraph company reported a rush of telegrams being sent out from here after the report of General Douglas MacArthur's removal from his far eastern command by President Truman.

The city council experienced stormy sessions over a new proposed sub-division. After much argument, particularly in regard to the old sewage system, Rolling Green, west of 14th avenue was annexed, and soon afterward Gallagher's or Mendota Lake subdivision was added on.

In 1951, Mendota learned what a long strike was like. The C.I.O. called a strike against the Conco plant which extended five long weeks.

The Red Cross bloodmobile visited Mendota frequently and successfully.

The Christmas season brought a home decoration contest which proved highly successful.

December of 1951 and early winter of 1952 brought severe snow storms, disrupting both transportation and communication. Twenty inches fell in a few days before Christmas and then drifted.

In 1952, Mendota established its first one-way street, Illinois Avenue from Washington to Jefferson, a stretch of one block, and the subject of many jokes. But this, accompanied by wider streets and the installation of parking meters, helped offset the parking problem.

Movie of the year was Cecil B. DeMille's "The Greatest Show on Earth", circus epic which played to capacity crowds an unprecedented

five days at the local theater. Strictly unglamorous Marjorie Main and Percy Kilbride (Ma and Pa Kettle), reminiscent of Beery and Dressler, were far and away Mendota's favorite movie stars.

The 100th anniversary of the St. Paul's church on the old Chicago road was observed Sunday, August 17. LaSalle, Utica, and Rockford also observed Centennials.

## THE ELEPHANT TAKES OVER

And this was election year, the year that was to see the Democratic party out of power in Washington for the first time since 1932. Just as the depression had served as fodder to bring the Democrats into power 20 years earlier, now corruption served as fodder to throw them out.

The Republican cause was enhanced by the selection of General Dwight D. Eisenhower as its presidential candidate, his personal popularity helping to pull his party to victory. Eisenhower spoke early in his campaign at Ottawa and many Mendotans made the trip to hear him speak. Our Mayor Glenn Momeny, chairman of the LaSalle County G.O.P. Central committee, introduced the general.

Mendota went to the polls 90 percent strong in November, the sixth precinct topping all others with 97.4 percent voting.

And now, with the furore over the election a thing of the past, all eyes were turned toward Mendota's big birthday party, the Centennial.

And so ends 100 years. Magnificent Whistle Stop, What Now?

## LOCAL BOY MAKES GOOD

**D**OWN THROUGH the years many young men and women went out from Mendota to mold careers for themselves in other places. Some of these were born and reared in Mendota. Others lived here in their youth. Hundreds have made good and are solid successes; they have attained prominence in the professions, in business, and in trade.

Some of them have become nationally-known names. By appearing in the public prints they have attained a sort of an ethereal prominence that provides material for interesting sketches. These stories come from all parts of the nation — from country lanes, from side streets and the main city streets.

This chapter relates at least a few of these success stories.

### “WILD BILL” HICKOK

WHERE IS THE BOY who has not thrilled to the exploits of “Wild Bill” Hickok at Saturday movie matinees, or, emulating his hero, shot it out with outlaws in a running gun battle through the neighbor’s prize tomato patch?

How many of the fabulous Hickok yarns are actually true is anyone’s guess. This much is known, however: James “Wild Bill”

Hickok, was born at Troy Grove and spent his boyhood in the Mendota area.

His father, William Alonzo Hickok, was of Scotch-Irish ancestry and was born in Vermont in 1801. In 1827 he married Polly Butler of his native county; ten years later they moved to Troy Grove where he opened the first general store. He also spent several years as a farmer. James had a fine example in his father who was a well educated man and a deacon in the Presbyterian church.

James was one of six children, four boys and two girls; a seventh child died in infancy.

\* \* \*

In his childhood he had firearms in his possession and became the owner of a first class rifle before his father's death, which occurred when the boy was 15.

In those early days a familiar sound was the howl of wolves. He helped rid the surrounding woods and plains of wolf packs which were killing hundreds of farmers' cattle, sheep, hogs and horses. A bounty of 50 cents for each wolf killed was offered at the trading post in the county.

He learned law and order from his father and knew the thrill and excitement of riding with his father while helping slaves escape on the "Underground Railway."

After his father's death he worked at many jobs including that of driving a mule team on a canal, the first in the state of Illinois, which was being built to bring transportation between Lake Michigan and La Salle.

He was an adventurous young man and tales of the glorious wild West stirred him. At the age of 18 he decided to go, on foot, to St. Louis. He took his rifle, knife, a bundle of clothes, and some food with him. On his journey he shot wild game, cooked over camp fires and worked on farms in return for food and a place to sleep. He found St. Louis an exciting busy center with steamboats bringing cargo from the East and reloading with western goods.

But his spirit of adventure was not satisfied and he journeyed by boat to Kansas. In the town of Monticello there was a shooting contest and James proved a sure aim with his rifle. His prize was a horse, and he was also given the privilege of joining the organization of "Red Legs," an antislavery force.

He yearned to go to Santa Fe, 680 miles distant. His opportunity came when the manager of an oxen caravan, which transported merchandise of daily necessities, asked him to substitute for one of the drivers.



In Santa Fe he met the idol of his boyhood, Kit Carson, who showed him the town.

Because of his ability in handling horses and men he was asked by company headquarters to take charge of a caravan of wagons containing rifles and ammunition. This he did, escorting each wagon safely over the most dangerous part of the mountain road and as he came back to help the last wagon a large grizzly bear sprang into his path. His frightened horse threw him and he tried to kill the bear using his gun but had no success. Two cubs scampered across the path and Wild Bill realized why the bear fought so fiercely. Now he drew his knife; the bear clawed his legs and chest terribly and tore and crushed his left arm but finally he killed her, then lost consciousness. He was taken to Santa Fe to recuperate and later spent the winter in Kansas City where he was sent to a hospital by the Stage Coach company. He regained strength by spring and went to Nebraska to work at Rock Creek Station on the Oregon Trail.

The Union Army had a depot at Ft. Leavenworth from which supplies were shipped to Nebraska, Missouri and elsewhere in Kansas. Wild Bill was asked to handle freight for them. On his third day out some guerrillas attacked the supplies. His guards retreated and the caravan fell into the enemy's hands, but Wild Bill, after being chased for seven miles finally rode free. He reached Independence to ask for troops to help him recapture his caravan but army headquarters told him they had no men to spare and referred him to Kansas City.

Before going on his way he decided to eat breakfast at a restaurant owned by a friend. There he heard a commotion and found some ruffians were holding the proprietor a prisoner in the back room and were trying to get him out to lynch him. They threatened Wild Bill when he entered and although they far outnumbered him, Wild Bill, his voice ringing with authority, ordered them to leave immediately if they wanted to leave alive. Facing his two pistols they began to slink out, and the town sang Wild Bill's praises.

He continued on his way to Kansas City and, with his soldiers, he set out to recapture his wagon train. After a brief battle the guerrillas galloped quickly away.

Wild Bill was a national hero at the time of the Civil War, noted for his feats of daring and courage and skill. He joined the Union Army and, because of his reputation as a fine marksman and a fearless person, he was made a scout, the most dangerous assignment of army life.

He had many narrow escapes behind enemy lines. He travelled by night and on one occasion he and four other scouts came shouting,

shooting and riding like the wind, and pretending they were a large group, thus outsmarting the enemy who tried to capture them. They traveled near enemy lines, and soon reached the safety of the home of one of the scouts who had a Cherokee wife living with her people. She informed them of the whereabouts of the southern forces and also told them that a Confederate captain was traveling through heavy timber carrying valuable papers and dispatches. Wild Bill searched for him, captured him, and found the dispatches concealed in the uniform. These he took to Springfield, the nearest headquarters.

Wild Bill now had orders to attach himself to the Confederate armies south of Arkansas. Here he was recognized by a corporal who accused him of being Wild Bill Hickok. Wild Bill was taken prisoner and sentenced to be shot at sunrise. His hands were bound behind him and he was taken to a cabin for the night and placed under guard.

When Wild Bill's eyes became accustomed to the darkness of the cabin he studied his surroundings as best he could and moving about he felt with his body to determine what furnishings, if any, there were. He found they consisted of a straight chair, table, bunk and stove. The two small windows were barred. He struggled to free himself of the ropes but to no avail.

A storm brought swift streaks of lightning which showed the outline of the cabin and its furniture. He found that the door had a homemade latch which opened from the inside, and a case knife, which was pushed into an auger hole of a log beside the door with just the handle showing, was used to lift the latch. Wild Bill stealthily backed up to the door and managed to grab the knife handle. In a corner of the room he pushed it securely between two logs and in this manner he managed to use the knife and cut through the rope binding his wrists. Then very cautiously he opened the latch and with a piece of stove wood he knocked the guard unconscious. He pulled him into the cabin and removed the uniform and put it on. He took the musket and took guard at the door outside until he got his bearings and then dashed to freedom.

\* \* \*

In the fall of 1862 Wild Bill was sent from Springfield with dispatches and during his journey he met with three mounted guerrillas. One man, riding a black horse, had a packet of dispatches wrapped around his waist. In the gun fight which followed two guerrillas were shot and killed and the third on the black horse galloped away. Wild Bill decided to follow him and met him at the bend of the trail by taking a different route. They met, fired at each other and the third guerrilla lost his life.

Wild Bill thought the beautiful black horse this man was riding was the finest he had ever seen. He captured it, and realizing it was government property, took it to headquarters and asked to be allowed to purchase it. They granted this and sold it to him for the sum of \$250. This horse had a coat which was shiny and black, a fine head, intelligent eyes, strong and straight legs and a deep chest. She moved with grace and smoothness. Wild Bill named her Black Nell and taught her many tricks. The most famous was that of dropping and lying motionless. This was accomplished by Wild Bill holding his hand out to a point where Black Nell could see it, then lowering it. At this signal she dropped and rider and horse would hide from danger.

In an effort to clear the Indians from the country between Ft. Hayes and Ft. McPherson, Wild Bill worked with the famous General George Custer, who complimented him on his good judgment and splendid marksmanship.

Wild Bill also found a true friend in Bill Cody, who was known as "Buffalo Bill" because of the many buffalo he killed as an official for the Kansas Pacific Railroad.

\* \* \*

Indians kept things lively in the West and in one encounter Wild Bill was wounded in the hip by a Cheyenne brave, one of seven. His faithful horse, Black Nell, carried him to Ft. Lyon where he found a letter from his sister urging him to come home to see his mother who was getting old and feeble. On the way home his fine horse became ill and died and he buried her in Kansas City. He continued on his journey and arrived in Troy Grove in spring to have a happy reunion with his family. He had been absent from home for 13 years when he returned in March, 1869. He stayed until his wound had healed. Dr. Thomas, of Mendota, lanced it and scraped the bone, and he soon recovered.

Now he became restless and yearned to return to the West. A letter came to him from a United States senator from Massachusetts, Henry Wilson, who asked if he would serve as guide to a group of women and men, including himself, who wished to tour the west during the summer. Wild Bill agreed to accompany this group, asking a fee of \$500.

They spent five weeks enjoying the wonderful sights. When they returned to Hays City, Senator Wilson entertained at dinner in Wild Bill's honor and presented him with two ivory-handled pistols.

At Hays City, a lawless town, people were looking for a marshall and prevailed upon Wild Bill to accept this position. He had placards

made informing visitors arriving at Hays City that they must deposit their fire arms or weapons at the saloons or at the city clerk's office.

No fist fighting or gambling was to be allowed. Wild Bill performed his duty according to the law. His pistol shots were accurate and he had great speed in drawing. He could aim accurately from the hip. He had practiced shooting at a dime to gain this perfection.

So successful was he in cleaning up Hays City that Abilene offered him the same position, which he accepted. He also cleared this town of its wild celebrations.

James Hickok acquired the name of Wild Bill essentially because of his great courage in handling men and dangerous assignments. The frontier code called for men fearless in face of danger. He was not a desperado nor a ruffian; he played cards but was not a professional gambler.

\* \* \*

On the plains Wild Bill wore a buckskin suit and moccasins. He had a flair for dress and at the time of his trip home he purchased a broadcloth suit and a fine linen shirt. He wore a broad-brimmed hat. He was tall, six feet, two inches in height and wore his hair long, down to his shoulders. He also had a moustache. He had a physique which would have made a fine model for a statue. He was graceful in the saddle and a handsome sight on his horse. He was naturally a quiet, modest person wishing to avoid the limelight; but when he talked it was to the point.

Buffalo Bill appeared in a play, a regular Wild West affair, and he persuaded "Wild Bill" to leave the West and go to New York to try his luck. Wild Bill played tricks on the cast, shooting so close to their legs that it caused them to jump and dance when in reality they were supposed to fall and die. Acting was definitely not to Wild Bill's taste and he soon left the make-believe of the theatre.

In the spring of 1869 Wild Bill stopped at the Passenger House in Mendota and was visited by many of our citizens.

He returned to the West and in 1876 he married Agnes Mersman at Cheyenne, Wyoming. She was a circus owner and manager and had been a famous equestrienne.

In June of 1876 he journeyed to the rich gold mining camp of Deadwood, South Dakota. He had traveled with friends and one afternoon joined a group who were playing a game of cards. Although it was not his custom, he sat with his back to the door. Taking advantage of this situation a ruffian by the name of Jack McCall fired a shot



in the back of Wild Bill's head and he dropped forward on the table — dead.

He is buried at Deadwood in the Mount Moriah cemetery where a monument has been erected in his memory.

## HERBERT O. (FRITZ) CRISLER

HERBERT ORIN CRISLER, now in his 12th year as Director of Athletics at the University of Michigan, has one of the most impressive records in intercollegiate sports history, both in the field of administration and in coaching.

Mr. Crisler's association with Michigan began in 1938 as head football coach but in 1941 he was elevated to the athletic directorship as successor to the late Fielding H. Yost. He continued this dual role until 1948 when he retired from coaching to devote full time to the increasingly complex duties of the directorship. As a coach Mr. Crisler established a brilliant record. His Wolverine teams won the Western Conference championship twice — in 1943 and 1947. They were Rose Bowl Champions in 1948.

In 1947 he was named "coach of the year" as he guided his powerhouse football team through an undefeated season that was climaxed by a 49-0 victory over Southern California in the Rose Bowl.

During his ten-year coaching span at Michigan his teams piled up 2,234 points to 732 for all opponents and gained 26,598 yards to 17,321 for the opposition. In winning the Rose Bowl title against Southern California on January 1, 1948, his teams concluded a 14-game winning streak. Previously Mr. Crisler served as head coach at Minnesota and Princeton, and his life-time record at all three institutions against the country's top teams since 1930 shows 116 games won, 32 lost and nine tied.

Mr. Crisler was born in Earlville, Ill., January 12, 1899. He attended Earlville high school for one year and spent the subsequent three years at Mendota high school.

His classroom work was of the highest order. Ambitious to enter the medical profession he maintained an average of 94 throughout his high school days. This earned him a scholarship at the University of Chicago in 1917 and to keep it he had to maintain a "B" average which he continued to do throughout his college career.

An accidental meeting with A. A. Stagg, famed "Grand Old Man" of football, then coaching Chicago, brought about Crisler's introduction

to college athletics. That meeting also might be termed a turning point in his life for it was Mr. Stagg who later gave him his first coaching opportunity and who counseled and guided his protege as he moved up the ladder to success.

The great Chicago coach edged back into a group of students watching practice one afternoon as he attempted to dodge a ball carrier headed his way. He collided with a tall, gangling youngster and both fell to the ground. Getting to his feet Stagg snapped, "Young man, if you are so interested in football, why don't you get a uniform?"

It was a new idea to a young man whose interest in athletics was only mild — but the idea stuck. He reported for practice the next afternoon because, as he explained later, "I wanted to see the inside of the gymnasium."

He saw a lot more than the inside of the gymnasium, and a lot more still when he got outside — including a half hour of scrimmage with the varsity. It was such a discouraging experience, however, that he decided football was not for him and he turned in his uniform.

A few days later Stagg, pedalling along a campus drive on his bicycle, met the young man. "I didn't think you were a quitter," was all he said. Next day Crisler was back in uniform, and in due course he became regular freshman end and his striking career in athletics was begun.

\* \* \*

His freshman year at Chicago was interrupted in the spring of 1918, however, by World War I, and he departed for the Officers' Training Camp at Camp McArthur, Waco, Texas. He returned to Chicago in January 1919, and it was in this year that he began to come into his own.

It was in his first season as a varsity player that he received the famous nickname of "Fritz". As a sophomore end in early season practice he managed to disrupt four consecutive plays in succession for his team through mistakes and ineptitude. Finally, Mr. Stagg called a halt to proceedings and in his customary dry manner, said to the embarrassed youth, "Crisler, you are 'Fritz' from now on, after the master violinist — not because you resemble him in any way, but because you are so different.

As a sequel to that incident many years later Mr. Crisler became acquainted with Fritz Kreisler, the violinist, and the two enjoyed the joke together. Upon several occasions when the violinist has given concerts at the University of Michigan he has played the latter's favorite number "Londonderry Air" for the Wolverine athletic director.

"Fritz" Crisler, the athlete, won places on the All-Western, upon Walter Eckersall's first All-American and Walter Camp's third All-American during his undergraduate football career. He played with distinction upon Chicago teams when the Maroons were powerful.

In basketball he started playing guard in the second Big Ten game of his sophomore year and never missed a contest for the rest of his collegiate career — a career which included the captaincy in 1921 and a membership on all-conference teams of 1920 and 1921. As a baseball player he pitched for Chicago during his three years there and made an exhibition trip to Japan with the 1920 Maroon nine.

Upon the conclusion of his athletic career he had earned nine letters in three sports, the second athlete in Chicago history to compile such a record. He graduated with 146 honor points, two more than necessary to earn Phi Beta Kappa honors but due to a technicality he was not elected to the group. However, he did earn the Western Conference medal for proficiency in scholarship and athletics.

Up to this point he had hopes of becoming a physician and surgeon but financial difficulties beset him and when Mr. Stagg offered him a post as assistant coach in football, basketball and baseball, two months before he was graduated in March, 1922, he took the position on what he thought would be a temporary basis, or until he was able to continue medical studies. Two years later, however, he became head baseball coach and assistant director of athletics at Chicago and his life work was cut out for him.

In 1930 he was offered head coaching job at Minnesota which he accepted and his major career as coach and athletic director was launched. At Minnesota he first became football coach but shortly afterward was advanced to the athletic directorship. In 1932 Princeton University beckoned and until he came to Michigan in 1938, his teams won 35 games, lost nine and tied five.

\* \* \*

As athletic director at Michigan he has been a shrewd and able planner and business man. The enlarged Michigan stadium, now seating 97,239 persons, is a result of his planning. A new hockey rink and golf service building, new baseball stands, a new women's swimming pool and gymnasium, all of these things have been consummated during his tenure and further expansion is in the planning stages.

During World War II, he travelled thousands of miles to help set up athletic and recreational programs in the armed services and two years ago went to Europe to help set up football programs for the overseas forces.

Mr. Crisler is married and has one son, Prescott, "Scotty", now a student at Stanford University. He is the author of a book "Winning Football" and also of numerous articles dealing with football and athletic problems.

## HELEN E. HOKINSON

TO THE MILLIONS of devotees of *The New Yorker* magazine's very specialized, often outrageous, always droll humor, the cartoons of Helen E. Hokinson were always a highlight.

Her famous "clubwomen", feverishly debating over inconsequential, produced smiles of recognition and delight; laymen and professionals shared in the appreciation of her artistry.

She was born in Mendota and reared here. Her father, Adolph Hokinson, was of Swedish descent and for many years a salesman for the Moline Plow Company. Her mother was Mary E. Wilcox, daughter of Phineas Wilcox, the well-known lecturer who, because he had once been a carpenter, was billed on lecture tours as "The Mendota Carpenter."

As a child Helen exhibited a decided flair for art. She sketched pupils and teachers at school. Children were delighted with the pictures she drew and many of her sketches were allowed to remain on the blackboard at the back of the schoolroom for a few weeks before being replaced by another.

Her father encouraged Helen during her school years in Mendota. After completing high school she had a growing desire for instruction in art but general college work did not interest her. She persuaded her parents to allow her to enter the Academy of Fine Arts in Chicago.

Following a year of study she began drawing fashions for exclusive dress shops on Michigan Avenue and for large department stores. The first illustration for which she was paid was of a pair of gloves in a Marshall Field's Advertisement.

At this time she lived in a studio in the tower of the Montgomery Ward building. The great poet, Edgar Lee Masters, lived in a nearby studio.

She was encouraged by friends to go to New York where she continued fashion illustration. She was also assigned a comic strip for Hearst's newspapers.

She felt the need for further study and went abroad to Paris where she made sketches of scenery and people. These were later utilized as



backgrounds for her cartoons. One of the greatest helps to an artist is knowing the principles of dynamic symmetry, the use of design in motion, and she studied it over a period of five years.

On one occasion she sketched a fat woman waving goodbye to someone on a departing ship and took it to art class for criticism. On seeing it her instructor laughed heartily and urged her to try cartoons.

She presented this sketch to *The New Yorker*. Not wishing to appear to rush things she did not return for several weeks, little realizing they had been trying to locate her. *The New Yorker* launched her fine career. Sometimes three or four cartoons were published in a single issue. In addition, she occasionally did a cover in color.

Her cartoons were spun with wit and imagination. *The New Yorker* asked her to supply captions for them and her dry humor spiced many thought-provoking lines.

She referred to her plump and fluttery clubwomen as "My Best Girls." She found them everywhere in her daily life — at clubs, lectures, museums, book stores and at many other large gatherings. Her cartoons were very human and the characters had an innocent seriousness about everything they did and said; Miss Hokinson did not poke fun at things but turned situations she drew into fun.

The fat women wore small, high-heeled shoes and many types of hats and often mink capes. Being women of the well-to-do class, they endeavored to keep up with the fashion trends, especially in hats. They loved cats and dogs.

Miss Hokinson herself enjoyed pets and had a tiger angora named Swenson Mousilini. This cat thrived chiefly on a certain brand of dog food which he ate cold. When the war broke out and horse meat was substituted for beef the cat refused to eat it. Neither would he eat fresh beef which was offered, so he finally died of malnutrition.

Several books of her cartoons were published, and these are veritable treasures. Her cartoons also appeared in many magazine advertisements.

\* \* \*

Her work was accurate in detail. She kept a large file to which she referred for necessary information. Her drawings were done at a common table, with a sewing table holding the various art materials needed.

Helen E. Hokinson was a modest and retiring person, small in stature. She had strong, even features, large violet blue eyes, soft curly hair which was red brown and turning gray. She had excellent taste in clothes and wore what best suited her. She loved to add a dash of color to her costume.

She helped many worthy causes and it was on such a mission that her life was brought to a close. She had planned to address a Community Chest fund luncheon in Washington, D.C. and had boarded an Eastern Airlines plane at LaGuardia Field. On arriving at the National Airport in Washington, the airliner was struck by a fighter plane which was owned by the Bolivian government and piloted by one of their flyers. Both planes landed in the Potomac River.

Helen E. Hokinson's work provides the world with a rich harvest. She maintained her ideals and fulfilled her destiny.

## PETER PHILIP BILLHORN

IN PETER PHILIP BILLHORN, Mendota produced an Evangelist who was to become associated with such fundamentalist leaders as Dwight L. Moody and Major D. W. Whittle.

He wrote and sang his own songs, and invented a folding organ so that he could play his hymns wherever he traveled.

Peter Philip Billhorn was born in Mendota in 1869. He was one of a family of six children, three girls and three boys. George F. Billhorn was the father and his mother was the former Catherine Niehardt.

Peter Billhorn attended grade school in Mendota, but moved to Chicago when fifteen years of age. After completing high school in Chicago he entered college at Northfield, Massachusetts, and later studied music at Erie, Pennsylvania, Normal School. Still later he studied voice with Hans Palatka and George F. Root.

In Chicago he learned the business of carriage making. He and his older brother, Felix, operated the firm under the title of the Eureka Carriage Works. Mr. Billhorn married Nellie M. McCaughna of Byron, Michigan, in 1894. No children were born to this union. She died in 1932 leaving an estate of approximately \$210,000.

In 1885, Mr. Billhorn began his career as a gospel singer and writer of hymns. In that same year he went West to take up work as an evangelist among the cowboys.

In his evangelistic work he became associated with such personalities as Moody, Whittle, Reverend B. Fay Mills and Dr. J. Wilbur Chapman. In this capacity he appeared extensively abroad as well as in the United States. One of the crowning achievements of his life occurred when he was selected to sing and lead the chorus at the World's Christian Endeavor convention in the Crystal Palace in London,

in 1900. His fame had achieved such heights that he was summoned to appear in a command performance to sing in Buckingham Palace before Queen Victoria. With his extraordinary voice, he continued to sing to great audiences until shortly before his death. At one of his concerts in Mendota at the Baptist Church there was an attendance of 1000 people and many were turned away.

He invented the folding organ in order to meet the necessity for a light portable instrument to carry with him. Legend has it that when traveling he noticed men passing through the train carrying folding tin dinner boxes and the idea occurred to him that an organ that would fold up was what he needed.

He was for many years president and owner of Billhorn Brothers, music publishers and organ manufacturers.

Mr. Billhorn was the author of many song books, some for male chorus and others for ladies voices. He also wrote popular sheet music. Some of his best known hymnals include "Crowning Glory" (1888); "Soul Winning Songs" (1889); "International Gospel Hymns" (1905); "Hymns of His Grace" (1907); "Hymns of the Second Coming" (1911); "Voices of Victory" (1914); "Songs of Peace and Power" (1916); "New Soul Winning Songs" (1926).

In the years before his death, in 1936, Mr. Billhorn resided in Chicago. He was an Elder in the Fourth Presbyterian church of that city. His main recreation outside of his work was an avid interest in baseball.

## CLARENCE BIER

ANOTHER MENDOTA ARTIST of note is Clarence Biers, whose spot drawings appear in the Saturday Review of Literature, Child Life, the New York Times Book Review and the Chicago Tribune Magazine of Books.

Diverse talent has produced a series of cartoons published for the armed forces by the Consolidated Publishing Company of Chicago; among the many paint books he has illustrated and written are those for Whitman Publishing Company of Racine. He has also produced many books, including four titles in the Glowing-Eye series.

He was born in Mendota, and spent his boyhood here. Clarence, his five sisters and two brothers grew up with ponies and horses as constant companions, his father being a prominent horseman and owning a set of stables in Mendota.

But his interest in art developed early, and at the age of 16 he conducted a Children's page for a national magazine — until it was discovered he was too young to hold such a position.

He attended the Art Institute in Chicago a year, but decided practical experience would be more beneficial. Accordingly he presented some sample illustrations to Rand McNally and Company, who recognized his ability by commissioning him to illustrate a new book.

He now lives at Arlington Heights, a Chicago suburb, and spends the winter months in Florida, continuing his work on books.

## THE BURRIGHTS

AMONG THE TOP-RANKING NAMES in horse racing circles is Burright; the family's long career covers many triumphs on the track.

E. T. Burright, better known as "Jock", was one of a family of 12. He farmed for Judge Cartwright and also rode running horses. Later he became interested in harness racing, and trained and raced the one-time world's champion mare, Citation. The noted running horse of Calumet farms, Citation, is named after the trotting mare Citation.

At least four brothers in the family followed the racing profession. One brother, Forrest, held considerable prestige for many years; and his wife, Neva, became the famous "Grandma Burright".

Harry Burright, the son of "Jock", drove his first race when he was thirteen. He then followed the various Illinois and Michigan circuits until he started racing at Aurora Downs and at Maywood Park in 1946. He has driven numerous horses to their records and holds the track record at Maywood with the mare, Rose Song.

In 1948 he was the world's leading driver of harness horses, winning 129 heats in that racing season, a record which has never been broken but which was recently tied by Levi Harner. The greatest horse he ever drove was the mare, Proximity.

Last winter he trained and drove with the Fitzpatrick Stable at Orlando, Florida, where four world record holders are located.

Eugene, a brother of Harry, also trains horses at Elkhorn, Wisconsin.

Mrs. Neva (Grandma) Burright has participated in many lively seasons of horse racing. Crowds gathered at the board fence near the grandstand to watch and cheer "Grandma", one of the leading harness racing drivers.



She was born on the infield of the Illinois track at Mt. Carroll, Illinois. An only child, she started training early in life. Her father, John Lovelinson, was a trainer, and, although his stable of horses was not large, he was successful in his work.

She married a trainer, Bert Holman, and both she and her husband drove. At his death in 1927, she took the responsibility of the stable and successfully raced the horses that year.

Two years later she married Forrest Burright, at that time from Oregon. She took over the driving and has been quite successful.

They raised all their horses with the exception of "Luckyette," who had a record of 2:04 $\frac{3}{4}$ . "Puzzette" at 2:04 $\frac{3}{4}$  was one of the best. "Pokadot," a pacer, owned by a Mr. Schroeger, and raced by Mrs. Burright for three years, had a record of 2:08 $\frac{1}{4}$ .

Her latest horse is a trotter, "Copperhead," who took a record last year of 2:11, as a three year old. This horse was a little rough and didn't start too many times. Both Mrs. Burright and her daughter, Joyce Hankins, drove him. Mrs. Burright finished second with him at Maywood. On one occasion this horse became frightened at a water sprinkler. She asked Harry Burright to drive him and he gave him his record. Her son, Darrell Holman of Mt Carroll also drove him several races, coming in second and third. This horse is now in his stable and is going to Maywood.

Mrs. Burright will race her daughter's horse, "Kinny Wyn," at the Maywood track. This horse has a record of 2:07, taken at Fairmont, Illinois.

## AXEL GUSTAF GULBRANSEN

WHEN AXEL GUSTAF GULBRANSEN and his seven brothers and sisters arrived in America with their mother, they chattered about their new home in the only language they knew — Norwegian.

The father had journeyed from Oslo, Norway, to this country five years before and as soon as he was financially able had sent for the family. They met in Chicago, and after a few months moved to Mendota. Axel's language handicap and the fact that at eleven years of age he had to enter the first grade singled him out for ridicule.

Jeers and fists — one kind of language small boys understand — made life miserable for Axel. After a period of suffering, he decided one Saturday morning to meet the situation and master it.

A big boy, four years older than he, was approaching him on the

narrow high plank sidewalk. This fellow had been in the habit of shoving him down into the mud. But this time Alex carefully measured their distance and before the big fellow realized what was happening Alex' fist shot out, and the surprised boy landed in the ditch.

This encounter gave Alex great confidence in handling many such situations, and a motto he observed in his future life was, "Finish the job fast, do it thoroughly and go on to something else."

Alex' father took a job at the organ factory when he moved to Mendota, and the boy learned this craft after school hours and on Saturdays. His first work was to sandpaper pieces of wood. Later he was allowed to try difficult cabinet work.

When he reached the age of 16 he accepted work in Worcester, Massachusetts, devoting evenings to violin lessons and spending most of his leisure time in practice. He was especially interested in tone and experimented with the sounding post to get many different effects.

Three years later, deciding he needed more experience, he returned to the Midwest and enrolled in a Chicago business college, his studies including arithmetic, writing and spelling. Recognizing his educational deficiencies, he began to read a great deal.

When his small bank account had dwindled, he found a job with a company making pianos and organs. He was soon appointed foreman of the action department which made the "inside" of organs. He steadily advanced into other departments and, with the exception of a break one year while he returned to Worcester, he continued with this company for 20 years. When he reached the age of 40, he became superintendent of the factory at a salary of \$4,000 a year.

\* \* \*

In 1906 he decided to establish a business of his own. His wife and friends were dubious about the new venture and tried to discourage him. He had a vision of making pianos play automatically and planned to invent a simple apparatus which could be installed in an ordinary piano to convert it into a player piano. There were many heartaches, puzzles over plans and patterns and hours of experimentation — a hundred problems.

At first he worked in the basement of his home. Then, needing a larger place to work on the invention, he rented a small loft in downtown Chicago. His savings began to disappear since he had given up his job; now he walked miles instead of riding a street car, and he ate lunches at free counters.

Almost a year passed before he perfected his invention and had it thoroughly tested. He applied for a patent and approached the prob-

lem of raising money to start a business. Enlisting the help of former friends, foremen and workmen his efforts raised \$12,000.

A fine piano was fitted with the player apparatus and displayed in a Chicago hotel. Favorable notices appeared in papers and business began to grow. Piano manufacturers demanded its invention for new pianos and in six years the business spread from a part of one floor to an entire six-story building.

Still further expansion occurred when a failing piano firm was sold to Mr. Gulbransen by bankers who had foreclosed it. With this acquisition, he decided to manufacture his own pianos, and eventually had 50 important patents registered in his name. Today there is still a Gulbransen Piano Company near Chicago, with offices in Melrose Park.

## FERDNAND VOLK

FERDNAND VOLK HAS MADE his life as meaningful as it has been long. His 95 years include more than 25 as a member of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra at the height of its fame.

He exhibited considerable talent even during his boyhood in Mendota. Even though his violin performances here were limited to crude instruments, his promise was apparent.

He and two companions would go to the farms in the surrounding territory where harvest festivals or dances were being held. There they would delight friends by playing tunes until the early hours. They would return home on foot, often without remuneration or refreshment for their labor.

Mr. Volk had very little musical training in his home town but at the age of 13 began taking lessons in Chicago. Subsequently he made application to Theodore Thomas who accepted him into The Theodore Thomas Orchestra. After Mr. Thomas' death, this orchestra became the famous Chicago Symphony Orchestra. He played with taste and distinction and was a valuable member of the orchestra.

Because he possessed great qualities of musical scholarship he was in demand to perform at many concerts and his musicianship illumined many a dark corner.

He saw much of this country, a great deal of it on horseback. He rode to Yellowstone and visited its wonders before it became a state park. He was a constant traveler in Colorado and California. After he was pensioned by the orchestra he visited Europe.

Ferdinand Volk was always a modest person, extremely reticent about talking of his past and the many memories which crowded his mind and heart.

He is spending the latter years at his sister's home in Oakland, California.

## FRANK B. KAUFMAN

THE PAST PRESIDENT of the widely known hardware firm of Hibbard, Spencer, and Bartlett is another who has Mendota roots: Frank B. Kaufman.

Upon graduation from high school at Mt. Pleasant, Iowa, he started work as an order clerk. In January 1906, after a two-year training period, he began service as a substitute salesman. Training in this line brought a knowledge of people and human nature in addition to the saleswork and, in October, 1908, he was assigned a territory in northern Illinois with headquarters in Mendota.

For almost two years he spent the week-ends at the Depot hotel. After his marriage in June, 1911, he established a home in Mendota, where their two sons were born. He was active as a member of the Elks and Masons and was affiliated with the Presbyterian church.

Because he had been assigned a change in territory, he moved to Dixon in 1928.

In 1932 he accepted the position of sales manager of the company and moved to Evanston. He was elected a vice-president in 1936 and became a member of the board.

When the time came to select a new president in 1946 they chose Mr. Kaufman, who had always been alert to business opportunities. He held that office until his retirement in October, 1952.

## FLORENCE DENISON

FLORENCE DENISON'S EXCITING CAREER with the Young Women's Christian Association was to take her to the far corners of the earth, giving her an understanding of the cultures of other lands and a list of friends dotted across the globe.

She received an appointment from the National Board of the Y.W.C.A. to go to Bombay, India as General Secretary and Physical



Director. She sailed from New York in January 1913. The trip was made by way of London, Paris and the Suez Canal and extended over a period of about three weeks.

She spent two successful years in Bombay and was then transferred to Tahore where she continued her work for another three years. Her daily duties brought many interesting contacts with the Eurasian people.

Her holidays were spent in sightseeing in different parts of the country. On one of these vacations she took a walking trip of nearly 400 miles in Kashmir and the Himalaya Mountains. Upon the completion of five years of work she travelled extensively in China, Japan and Hawaii.

After returning to the United States, she served as foreign personnel director with the National Y.M.C.A. in New York. Later she travelled widely in the United States, interviewing candidates for foreign service. She continued overseas travel, and visited Europe and North Africa.

When she returned from India she arrived in San Francisco just in time to contact her sister, Faith, who was sailing from New York the following day as a Red Cross nurse to France.

## LOUISE ANSCHICKS PRUD'HOMME

ANOTHER MENDOTA WOMAN whose chosen career took her far from the hills of home into adventure and danger is Louise M. Anschicks (Mrs. Eli S. Prud'Homme). Capt. ANC Retired, whose record in the Army Nurse Corps Reserve was outstandingly distinguished.

A native of Mendota, she and her husband now reside in San Francisco. She was one of eight children, four boys and four girls, born to her parents, Ernest and Katherine (Knauer) Anschicks, her father having four other children by an earlier marriage.

Louise attended the North School and the East Mendota Public Schools, graduating in 1907. It was about 1909, while she was a patient at the Dr. A. W. Chandler Hospital in Compton, Illinois, that she decided she would like to enter the nursing profession. However, she first remained at home for several years, and on a few occasions attended the sick with Dr. O. P. Harris.

In 1912 she entered nurses' training in Chicago at Englewood Hospital, an accredited school affiliated with the Northwestern University

Medical School and the Children's Memorial Hospital. She was graduated in 1915 with a class of 13 members.

After a short term of private duty nursing and institutional work she answered the call for Red Cross Nurses in World War I. She received an appointment to the Army Nurse Corps Reserve in 1917 and was stationed at Camp Sherman, Chillicothe, Ohio. Later she was transferred to West Baden, Indiana General Hospital, a temporary reception center for wounded from France. Other assignments included Lakewood, New Jersey; Camp Dix, New Jersey and New Haven, Connecticut General Hospital, No. 16. After completing her year of service she returned to civilian life.

The following three years she worked in Chicago, as a member of the Visiting Nursing association, giving care in homes. She went East and took post-graduate courses at the Manhattan Eye, Ear, Nose and Throat hospital, New York City, for six months and at Philadelphia Communicable Disease hospital for three months.

She then accepted a position for six months at the Philadelphia General hospital. This work was followed by tubercular nursing in Colorado and subsequently at Fitzsimmons General hospital where in addition to tubercular cases there was general hospital nursing.

She worked as a member of the Regular Army Nurse Corps for 20 years. In June, 1920, a National Defense Act amendment granted nurses relative rank equivalent to that of commissioned officers. But it was not until April, 1947, that an Army-Navy Nurse Act was passed and nurses given full commissioned temporary rank and all the rights and privileges of the male commissioned officers.

Louise Anschicks was assigned duty to many posts within and outside the United States. Her station assignments on foreign duty included Hawaii from 1935 to 1937, and the Philippines from June 1941 to Feb. 1945.

\* \* \*

The years 1941-1945 included Corregidor, Bataan and three years in prison camp. She was among ten nurses on a plane which was disabled on the Island of Mindanao. They were prisoners of the Japanese there from the time of the surrender of General Sharpe's forces in May, 1942, until August, 1942. Then the Japanese took them by various methods of troop transportation and boat around the coast of Zamboanga to Manila. There they were reunited with the other Corregidor prisoner nurses and placed in Santo Tomas.

There were 4 thousand men, women and children who were prisoners in Manila, but the nurses were the only military persons in the group. The Japanese did not consider nurses as military persons when

they learned that their relative rank was not connected with any knowledge of troop formation.

The overflow of prisoners from San Tomas, about 2000, were sent to Los Banos. Captain Louise Anschicks arrived at Santo Tomas on September 10, 1942, and remained there until liberation by General MacArthur's Forces on February 3, 1945.

In spite of all the hardships endured Captain Louise Anschicks has never regretted the service to our country and says if given a second choice she would again volunteer.

She received many awards consisting of Army ribbons and medals. She was given a raise of one grade in rank as a nurse by the order of General Douglas MacArthur. She was also awarded the Bronze Star.

At the close of her service of 20 years she was given disability retirement in the grade of Captain. She has served mankind with eagerness and has maintained a positive outlook on life.

## LT. COL. ARLENE G. SCHEIDENHELM

MILITARY AWARDS, a precious possession to those who earn them, tell the story of Arlene Scheidenhelm's unusual career.

She is the recipient of the Legion of Merit, W.A.A.C. service medal, Army of Occupation service medal, American Theater service medal, and World War II Victory medal.

Arlene G. Scheidenhelm answered the nation's call to military service in World War II when she entered military service as a member of the Women's Auxiliary Army Corps in August, 1942. Her military training began at Fort Des Moines, Iowa. In January 1943, she became an instructor in the W.A.C. school at Commerce, Texas.

In September she was transferred to Manhattan Engineer District, Oak Ridge, Tennessee, a site of atomic bomb research, where she held the rank of commanding officer, W.A.C. Detachment.

In November, 1946, she was assigned duty in Heidelberg, Germany, as a member of the staff, Civil Affairs division, Headquarters European Command.

Since August, 1950, Lt. Colonel Scheidenhelm has been a member of the staff, Office Chief of Army Field Forces, Ft. Monroe, Virginia.

She was born and reared in Mendota and upon completion of her high school studies she entered the University of Illinois from which

she graduated in 1932. She taught in the Mendota Public Schools from 1933 to 1935. She then accepted a position as director of women's activities, personnel and recreation, Owens-Illinois Glass Company, Bridgeton, New Jersey, where she remained until she entered military service.

## JOHN GUTKNECHT

HON. JOHN GUTKNECHT, current State's Attorney of Cook County, Illinois, resided in Mendota for approximately 10 years until about 1903.

He attended Blackstone school and finished his first year of high school at old Blackstone high school. His father was a carpenter and contractor and had the contract for the carpentry work in the Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Church, several store buildings and some houses in Mendota.

The family moved to Chicago about 1903 and State's Attorney Gutknecht graduated from a Chicago high school and entered the University of Michigan in the fall of 1907. While at the University of Michigan he was the roommate for five years of the Hon. Harry Reck, former county judge of La Salle county. Both men were chosen for the University debating team.

State's Attorney Gutknecht received his A.B. degree from the University of Michigan and his first two years of law. He then went to the University of Colorado where he received his Bachelor of Law Degree and then returned to Chicago to practice.

He was elected a municipal judge for the City of Chicago and served two full terms of six years each. While municipal judge he attained considerable fame as judge of the Boys' Court and also as judge of the Traffic Court. He is now state's attorney of Cook county, having been recently elected in November, 1952.

He has traveled extensively throughout the world and is an interesting speaker.

## E. B. CARPENTER

E. B. CARPENTER WAS A MASTER in his craft. When he moved to Mendota in 1860 to establish an organ manufacturing company, he had already attained considerable stature in America as a builder of fine cabinet organs.



He was born at the old Carpenter Homestead on Governor's Hill, Guilford, Vermont, and was of colonial and revolutionary stock. His grandfather, a Vermont pioneer, had framed the constitution of the state and was its first lieutenant governor.

Carpenter came to Mendota from Brattleboro, Vermont, where he had previously been in the organ manufacturing business. His business here was likewise successful; he constantly improved the industry with his many inventions, one of which was the divided octave coupler. His Mendota plant employed 30 men, a sizable number for the 1860s.

His son, E. P. Carpenter, learned the business here in Mendota and returned to Brattleboro and established an organ building firm of his own.

His expert knowledge fitted him well for an appointment as judge of musical instruments at the World's Fair in Chicago in 1893. He acted in the same capacity at the Fair in Antwerp.

After retiring from business, E. B. Carpenter returned to Vermont. He joined the Carpenter factory there as superintendent of the mechanical department. His life came to a close in Brattleboro in 1891.

Mr. Carpenter's daughter was married to George Stoddard Denison, a son of Rev. Nathan Denison. Young Denison was a druggist in Mendota from 1869 until his death in 1922.

## EDWARD L. SCHEIDENHELM

EDWARD L. SCHEIDENHELM was a creative giant in the engineering field, contributing heavily to the construction of the Chicago Municipal (now Navy) Pier and the Savanna Ordnance Plant.

He and his three brothers, Frank, Albert and Frederick were the sons of Jacob and Katherine (Faber) Scheidenhelm. These boys were born and raised in Mendota and attended Blackstone school, where their father was a member of the board of education. He also served several terms as president of that group.

When Edward had completed high school he entered the then young and small University of Illinois to study civil engineering. He was graduated in 1892. After working for engineering and construction firms in Chicago for a number of years, he organized his own contracting concern in 1906.

His life work was to engage him in such projects as the Savanna, Illinois, Ordnance Plant built in 1922; and the Chicago Municipal Pier completed in 1914. He also served his alma mater as chairman of the University of Illinois Memorial Stadium building committee.

He retired from active business in 1930. He continued an interest in community planning and general civic affairs in Wilmette and Evanston until his death in 1947. Almost until that time he also retained a great proficiency in golf. Another leisure time activity he enjoyed was garden planning and landscaping.

## CYRUS W. BEST

ALTHOUGH CYRUS W. BEST's musical accomplishments in this area were considerable, he was to find his greatest challenge and achievement in the balmy climate of Hawaii.

He was born in Mendota in 1865 and resided here for many years, becoming widely known as a splendid pianist, teacher of music, and concert promoter. His wife, being a harpist, shared his interest in music.

Mr. Best attended college at Oberlin, Ohio and graduated from their Conservatory of Music in 1890. He later had appointments as director at a number of music conservatories throughout Illinois. For seven years he was director of a concert series which presented 2800 performances. During World War I he was director of Y.M.C.A. entertainment for soldiers and sailors in the central and southern United States.

In 1919 he and Mrs. Best went to Honolulu to reside. There he contributed to the cultural life of the islands. Over a period of 15 years he arranged musical entertainment for the Y.M.C.A. every Sunday afternoon. He performed a similar service for Mid-Pacific Institute and was active in church work. He collected autographs of famous musicians; his stamp collection was one of the finest in the Islands, and he conducted an exchange which became an important interest in his life.

Mr. Best, dean of Honolulu musicians, died at the age of 83 years at his home in Manoa.

## FAITH CARPENTER DENISON OSTERGREN

MENDOTA'S STUDENT NURSES and Red Cross workers have a striking example in Faith Carpenter Denison Ostergren.

Joining the Red Cross nurses during World War I, she was assigned in April 1918 to duty in France. She served in a Red Cross convalescent home in St. Cloude and was later transferred to Red Cross Hospital No. 5, a tent hospital in the Bois de Bologne of Anteuil, a suburb of Paris.

In August she went to the front with Evacuation Hospital, No. 11, and also with Hospital, No. 2. After serving at the front for almost three months she returned to Hospital No. 5.

She then received an appointment to the North Balkan Commission for Relief Work in Serbia. She and three other nurses arrived at the remote little Serbian town of Palanka where they fought typhus.

The young Miss Denison was the recipient of many distinctions. Because of her outstanding achievements the Serbian Red Cross awarded her the medal of St. Sava.

In New York she was one of 12 Americans to whom decorations were awarded by the direction of King Alexander. The citations were presented by Dr. Todorovitch, consul general of the Yugoslavian Kingdom.

Miss Denison is married to R. C. Ostergren and at present resides in Boston. She is active in community affairs and has done much volunteer work during the West Virginia floods and during World War II in Boston.

\* \* \*

Is the tide ebbing?

We cannot foresee what lies in the dim distance. But we look to the future for other Mendota people to carve niches of national fame. Some of these careers are now in the making. We are confident the tide is ever "coming in".





## AND NOW, ON THE FAR RIGHT . . .

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, please step into our surrey with the fringe on top and let us begin our tour of some of the interesting landmarks of Mendota. Now that you've seen the thriving industries, modern schools, and beautiful churches and homes, let us point out some of the places of historic interest. On the far right, we call your attention to . . .

This unimposing brick structure where Washington street meets Main street, has been witness to many events the past 100 years. For it is now the Illinois Central freight house, but was the first brick structure built in Mendota in 1853 and was used as a warehouse in its early years.

As we drive down Sixth street, westward, you see another brick structure, originally the Eagle Mills building, erected about 1865 by one Frank Korteck. Not so long ago a tavern occupied the premises and called itself, appropriately enough, "the Old Mill".

On your right as we go on, please note the cannon which adorns our City Park. Though you might more correctly call it an artillery piece, we Mendotans have always called it "the cannon" and always will. After the first world war the federal government gave such a cannon to any American Legion post requesting one. With it came a number of cannon balls and for years these formed a pyramid nearby. Then came Pearl Harbor and, needing scrap iron badly, the government asked that all trophies be returned for scrap metal. The promise

was given that they would be replaced when possible. This agreement was fulfilled and the cannon you see today was received in 1947.

Moving on into the next block we note a long, two-story frame building on our left. This building housed the old organ factory, now remodeled into apartments. Under the leadership of Mr. Carpenter, a cottage organ building business was established in 1865 in a one-room building several blocks east on this same street. In 1875 the business was incorporated and moved to this spot, where it employed over 100 men and sold several thousand organs annually. The industry and many of its employees later moved to Ottawa following an altercation over fire protection.

Some of these organs are still in existence. One very nice one may be seen in the Bureau County Historical Society exhibit in Princeton.

## THROUGH THE YEARS

In the next block on your left, at 1105 Sixth street, stands the Denison house. This once-famous show place was built in 1867 by the Mr. Carpenter who established the organ factory, and is still occupied by members of his family. Many of the furnishings in this house were brought from Vermont when the pioneers came west. One interesting feature is the grandfather clock. The case had been damaged by fire; so the works were removed and built into the dining room wall where they are still telling the time of day.

When the present owners decided to insulate the house recently, they discovered that it had been done for them many years ago. All the walls were constructed with double air spaces. This is probably one of the earliest examples of home insulation.

The large Denison house originally stood in the center of extensive grounds, surrounded by a picket fence. Within this enclosure was a beautiful iron fountain, cascading water into a basin containing goldfish. The water came from a well in the back yard and was forced to the fountain by a windmill. There were no city water mains in those days. The Denison fountain was a "must" on the list of things to be seen while on a Sunday walk in those days. Even though part of the spacious grounds has been sold and the fountain removed to the back yard, this house still reflects the charm of gracious hospitality.

And now, as our tour approaches the end of Sixth street at Thirteenth avenue, we see an impressive three-story edifice which is still

called "The Seminary". A Presbyterian minister, James Henderson, erected the building on a tract of land donated by Timothy Blackstone. In 1857 the school was opened with about 200 students from Mendota and vicinity. Until Mr. Henderson's death, classes were conducted in connection with the local Presbyterian church.

Later the building was sold to private interests and then became the "Hoffman House", a very elegant hotel. It is now used as an apartment house. In spite of the impressive facade, the Seminary building is not nearly as large as it appears because it is narrow from front to back. We cannot help but wonder if it was so designed in order to impress the approaching student and his family.

Now we turn to the right and drive along Thirteenth avenue to Washington street. In order to see one of Mendota's most unusual landmarks, we jog one block east on Washington to Iowa avenue. On this corner is our famous "Octagon" house. It is the Warren Clark house, an eight-sided affair built in 1853, truly an object of Centennial interest. This old house, because of its architectural novelty, is described in the book, "Historic Illinois Houses".

Plans were taken by Mr. Clark from a volume written by Professor O. S. Fowler, a noted phrenologist of his day. There is no evidence of phrenological symbolism in the unusual wedgelike shape of the rooms. That Prof. Fowler's ideas did influence home builders is indicated by the fact that these octagonal houses are found in various parts of the country. Interior trim is of pine and the staircase of walnut. Another home, built along similar lines on the opposite side of this street, was considered a bit more elegant because it boasted a fancy cupola on its roof.

## ON WITH THE TOUR

Where Iowa meets Jefferson street we see the Theurer house. This is a small, white frame dwelling which was moved to its present location from the old brewery site located a few blocks to the east. This house and with one standing on Wisconsin avenue, were used as office and warehouse in connection with the Volk brewery built early in Mendota's history. An old photograph in the possession of Fred Bauer shows that these houses were in existence when the main brewery building was erected.

Later they were moved to their present locations and replaced by more modern facilities. Even the porch trellis, a part of the original structure, has survived the ravages of time.

Now, ladies and gentlemen, we turn one block back to Thirteenth avenue and a short distance north on highways 51 and 52, bringing us to Lake Mendota. We drive in and park a few moments while we try to recreate this spot as it was many years ago. Lake Mendota is a recreational project developed in recent years by a group of public spirited citizens and is supported by municipal taxation. This small but picturesque lake was truly made by man.

Originally it was dug out, a shovelful at a time, to provide a reservoir of water for use in Burlington railroad locomotives. Gravity carried the water through a large pipe to the point where it was run into locomotive tenders. In the early days it was called the "big pond" and was a mecca for the bent-pin fishermen of this area.

Most Mendota men recall the days when they packed a sandwich in one end of a peach basket and a can of worms in the other to spend a delightful summer day fishing for bullheads at the Big Pond. Some of the more adventurous boys sometimes demonstrated their bravery by spending a night camping on its shores. Adventure indeed, especially if thunderstorms added to the occasion.

In the winter the pond was the source of ice for all the ice boxes in town. After cold weather had frozen the water to sufficient thickness, the ice was cut into huge blocks and carted to the old ice house near the shore, there packed in sawdust to await hot weather. Until men and teams took over for ice-cutting, the pond was the scene of gay skating parties. Many a high school romance flowered there during the skating season.

Our tour now proceeds east on Meriden street and a few doors north on Illinois avenue brings us to the Advent Christian church, an attractive white frame building which is of historic interest. In 1856 the Lutherans erected a college in the northern section of the city. A part of this present Advent Christian church was used as a place of worship in connection with the Lutheran college. Later, Wartburg Seminary from Dubuque, Iowa, took over the college building and enlarged it.

The original college building was then used as a dormitory for the students and still stands in that vicinity. It is being used as a dwelling and may be seen one block east and one block south of our present high school.

Proceeding to the southeast corner of Fifth avenue and Seventh street, we see the home of George Nisley, which was originally the Free Will Baptist church. You will note the church-like entrance tower and windows at the front of the residence.



## BECAUSE OF YOU

**B**UT MENDOTA TODAY is not the result of events and circumstances alone; the bulwark of every community is its people, and the fate of any pioneer settlement depends upon the hardiness of its stock.

And thus it was with Mendota; the city grew because its first residents were people of vision who saw beyond the malaria-infested bogs into the future. Many of them never saw their dreams materialize; others, however, lived into the present century and witnessed the full evolution from settlement to city.

This chapter is devoted to brief biographies of many of the first Mendotans. It must unfortunately be incomplete, for true pioneers are seldom impressed with their own importance and often leave but one record of their existence: the city they built.

### ISAAC ECKERT

ISAAC ECKERT was born in Lebanon County, Pennsylvania in 1844. At the age of four, he came to Illinois with his parents, the Rev. Joseph and Nancy Eckert. It took them six weeks to make the journey, coming by teams. They settled on a farm east of Mendota, where Isaac lived until his death in 1896. In January, 1864, he enlisted in Company C, Seventh Illinois Cavalry, participating in the battle of Nashville and other engagements. He remained in active service until the close of the war when he received his honorable discharge.

Of the five children born to Isaac and Sarah (Snyder) Eckert two are still living; John A. and Julia M. (Mrs. Ira Morehouse).

## ARTHUR C. McINTIRE

BORN IN MAINE in 1836, Mr. McIntire came to Mendota Township at about sixteen years of age. He engaged in farming and devoted most of his time to stock-raising. He raised shorthorn cattle, road and draft horses, and Cotswold sheep. His farm was known as the Vermillion Springs Stock Farm.

Mr. McIntire was a prominent and influential member of the Republican Party in local and state politics. He served on Governor Oglesby's staff, and as Township Supervisor for five years.

## RICHARD PEART

RICHARD PEART, born in Scotterthrope, Lincolnshire, England, March 6, 1834, came to Mendota shortly after his marriage to Miss Sarah Jewett in 1854. He was employed in a meat market and later started his own business. After operating his market for forty years, he retired.

Residents of Mendota who are grandchildren of Mr. and Mrs. Peart are Mr. F. E. Cavell, Mrs. L. Knauer, and Mrs. W. G. Van Etten.

## ADONIRAM AND ARZA SMITH

IN 1845, two large covered wagons left Monkton, Vermont, many weeks later reached LaSalle County, Illinois, and settled on farm land a few miles east of what is now Mendota. Adoniram Smith, wife Laura, and six children were in one wagon; Arza Smith, wife Polly, and four children were in the other. In Vermont these two brothers, and two who didn't come west, were cabinet makers, making furniture, carriages, etc. They made their own covered wagons and all the furniture to take west to their new homes.

The children enjoyed the trip, and years later told of the hospitality of earlier settlers in Ohio and Michigan. They remembered especially the pears and apples and other food.

Adoniram's oldest son was Joseph who married Celia Rust; two of their grandsons, Archie Smith and Roland Smith, live with their families on land purchased by Smiths in the early days.

Arza's only daughter, Amanda, married Reuben Crandall, and lived on a farm southeast of Mendota. Their grandchildren have scattered to Michigan, Colorado, Montana, and California. Ina Jones and Grace Wright are the only ones living near Mendota. A cherry

lampstand and a few other pieces of furniture that came from Vermont are still in use.

## JOHN WESLEY HASTINGS, SR.

JOHN WESLEY HASTINGS, SR., came in 1853 from Moorfield, Harrison Co., Ohio, to LaSalle Co., Illinois. He purchased a large acreage of farm land, then put up a store building, and a large residence. He gave land to the Methodists for their church building. John, Jr., and Samuel, the two oldest of seven sons, had attended Business College in Columbus, Ohio, so helped to manage the store. Two sons, Charles and Thomas, were soldiers in the Union Army—Thomas was killed in battle.

Samuel later operated a drug store until 1898, when he retired. The Hastings home, erected in 1854 by John W. Hastings, is located at the corner of Monroe Street and Michigan Avenue, and is one of the landmarks of Mendota. The only descendant living in Mendota now is Wesley Hastings Wright.

## DANIEL McNETT

OH WHAT FUN there really is in a family of 17 children. This was the number of mouths Daniel and Mary Boomer McNett had to feed when they came to Mendota in 1858 from Virgil, N. Y.

Daniel bought the building at the corner of 6th Street and 6th Avenue now occupied by Grubb's service station, and started a grocery store which he operated for many years.

When this family came west they of course brought their most treasured possessions. Among these was a Melodian made by Mason and Hamlin of Boston, the first organ of its kind in LaSalle County. People came for miles around to spend evenings playing and singing to its lovely music.

Mrs. David (Hazelmae Nisley) Reese now has this Melodian.

The grandchildren living around Mendota are Mrs. John (Mabel Powell) Ortgiesen, Charles D. Powell, and Mrs. Wilfred (Anna McNett) Hoagland.

## JACOB L. NISLEY

BORN IN 1839, Jacob Nisley's family came by covered wagon and boat from Pennsylvania to Peru and settled south of Mendota in 1840. His parents farmed and also ran Peek's Tavern, an inn where many migrating families stopped for the night on their westward trek.

He taught school for several years and married Isabelle Rife, one of his pupils. Coming to Mendota he worked for Fowler and

Garrison, meat dealers. Later he bought Garrison out and until 1867 continued this business with Mr. Fowler.

In the summer of '67, Mr. Nisley entered politics, running for Superintendent of Streets. Winning this election he held the office for nearly forty years. His first vote was for Abraham Lincoln. This made his brothers so angry that they made him walk home. With each step he took he vowed more and more that he never never never would vote anything but the Republican ticket. He died in 1918.

The living children are George W., Mrs. Albert (Mabelle Nisley) Blotch and Jacob Nisley. The late Edgar P. Nisley was another son.

## NEHEMIAH HOWARD JOHNSON

NEHEMIAH HOWARD JOHNSON was born May 26, 1807, in Hardwick, Mass., came by boat in 1837 to Peru, Illinois, then walked to what is now LaMoille, and decided to settle there. He was a brick mason by trade; there are still many buildings in Bureau County which he helped to erect.

In 1849 he purchased seventy-two acres of land east of LaMoille from the government, and built the main part of the farmhouse which is still standing. He taught school during the winter months near Perkins Grove. In 1841 he married Eunice Randall of Barre, Mass., who died a few years later, leaving a daughter, Isabelle.

In 1857 he married Amanda L. Mills, who had come to that community with her parents in a covered wagon from Ticonderoga, New York, and was teaching school near LaMoille. They lived first in Clarion Township, and later purchased and moved to a farm three and a half miles west of Mendota. It was known for many years as the Dan Reeder farm and is now owned by Willard Otterbach. In 1871 the Johnson family moved to Mendota and made their home for the next thirty-one years in the large brick house on Fifth Street which later became the Lewis & Clark Maternity Hospital, and is now an apartment house.

Four daughters were born to the Johnsons: Ella, Lucy, Hattie (Mrs. W. T. Holliston) and Sarah (Mrs. J. W. Johnson). Mr. Johnson was always prominent in the communities in which he lived and during slavery his home was a refuge for the oppressed. He was in the Loan business for many years and held mortgages on numerous pieces of property in and near Mendota. He died in 1902 at the age of 95 years; his wife died in 1929 at the age of 96. The direct descendants of Mr. and Mrs. Johnson now living in Mendota are three grandchildren, Arthur and Neil Holliston and Mrs. Edith Fahler.



## REUBEN A. PRESCOTT

REUBEN A. PRESCOTT was born February 25, 1818 in Grafton, Mass. He married Mary Rebecca Prescott, May 23rd, 1843. He was country store merchant in Epping, New Hampshire before coming to Mendota in June 1855 leaving behind his wife and three small children. He purchased a farm north of Mendota which is now known as the Matychowiak farm. Being a good carpenter he built a three-room cottage then went back East for his wife and children.

They traveled to Chicago via the water route from the East, then to Mendota via the C. B. & Q. Railroad as it had just been completed.

After his son, Alfred, was old enough to take over the farm work he and his wife moved to Mendota and operated a meat market on North Main Street. Later he opened a shoe store in the same building, selling merchandise supplied by Mrs. Prescott's brother, Samuel, a shoemaker in the East.

Mrs. Prescott passed away in 1886, Reuben in 1888. Both are buried in Restland Cemetery in Mendota.

Descendants living in this vicinity are the Prescott brothers, Gale, Frank, Allen and Guy. Mrs. Paul Stenger and Mrs. Sarah Martin are also direct descendants.

## PARDON CRANDALL

PARDON CRANDALL of Hopkinton, R. I., and Canterbury, Conn., had every reason for wanting to make a new start in a new state. In 1833 and 1834, his daughter, Prudence, had been a target for community hostility when she attempted to operate a school for colored children. In 1837, his daughter, Almyra, died after a long and painful illness. In January, 1838, he received word that his son, Dr. Reuben Crandall, had died in Jamaica of a lung disease contracted while in Federal prison, awaiting trial on charges of having passed abolitionist literature. He was acquitted—but not in time to restore his health. Pardon's one remaining son, Hezekiah, had escaped misfortune.

In February, 1838, a month after Reuben's death, Mr. Crandall bought some Illinois land in Troy Grove Township from Charles W. Rockwell and came to look it over in April of that year. Apparently satisfied, he had the deed recorded in Ottawa on May 14, 1838. But by July of the same year he had returned to the East and died—allegedly of malaria contracted in Illinois. On the day of his funeral, Hezekiah's wife died, following the birth of a sixth child.

Three years later, in 1841, Hezekiah came out to Illinois to check on the land. He plowed a few acres, built a small house and returned

to his manufacturing interests. In April of the following year, Prudence (of the ill-fated venture in negro education) arrived on the Crandall holding to stay. With her was Hezekiah's eldest son, Obadiah, who was thirteen years old at the time. During the ensuing years, the active farming was done by Obadiah while Hezekiah offered advice by mail . . . "I hope you got the wheat of Turner at cash price. Look carefully over the papers & letters I sent and the Book and enquire of Mr. Kelcy and you will find out whether you had to pay anything twice over . . . Obadiah, take care of your yokes and chains—get the plow in to Mr. Root's Barn if possible to prevent rotting."

In 1844, Pardon's widow, Esther, came to Illinois to make her home and Hezekiah's children by his first marriage, as they became old enough. Reuben arrived in 1848 and assisted his older brother with the farming. A sister, Esther, also came in the '40's and married Joseph Worsley. Another sister, Huldah, married George Webster, of a pioneer family. In the 1860's, both Obadiah and Reuben built brick homes on the land originally purchased by their grandfather—about four miles east of Mendota. These homes are still standing.

## REV. WILLIAM EDWARDS

BETTER KNOWN as Father Edwards by all who knew and loved him, the Rev. William Edwards came to the United States in 1831 and settled in Washington, D. C.

He was a contractor and while there was given the contract to change the course of the Potomac river and make the Washington Basin. This required three years and was considered a wonderful feat of engineering.

In 1837, he came to Illinois and, in 1857, he and Oliver Gibberson started a hardware store. Later he and his son, George W., became partners. The store was then located on Washington St., in the building next to the present Gish Jewelry store. Later George W. took his son George B. as his partner. The Edwards Hardware Store is now in the ownership and management of the fourth generation, Marvin Edwards, having been in partnership with his father, George B., until his death.

William Edwards studied for the ministry while in England and had the honor of preaching in the Westminster Abbey in London. He followed that calling in Mendota and Troy Grove, preaching the Gospel in several churches a week and was known as a Circuit Rider.

He helped to build the present Methodist church and was its first Sunday School Superintendent.

He married Sarah Hide while in England, and she became heir

to the famous Hide estate worth \$85 million. Two of her brothers went back to claim this fortune and fought several years for it. They finally won the case but died before they could get passage home. Father Edwards and wife Sarah could have had it had they gone after it but it took money to travel and so all the fortune is still over there. Many times the (now thousands) heirs have tried to prove heirship but with no success . . . so far.

Three generations to date have lived to celebrate their Golden Wedding: William and Sarah Hide Edwards, 1831-1881; George Washington Edwards and Martha McNett Edwards, 1863-1913, and George Washington Nisley and Mae Edwards Nisley, 1898-1948, all celebrations taking place on 5th Ave. within two blocks.

The great grandchildren living here or near are: Burton, Marvin and John Erle Edwards, Mrs. J. O. (Gwendolyn Edwards) Heining, Paul Carroll, and Mrs. Dave (Hazelmae Nisley) Reese.

## GEORGE WASHINGTON GHEER

GEORGE WASHINGTON GHEER was born November 25, 1816 in York, Penn.

At the age of 13, George, and his family crossed the Allegheny mountains from Virginia in a covered wagon drawn by a pair of oxen. The trip took a month and for several days they were without food and the entire family suffered greatly. They settled in Pennsylvania and George took a job with the United States Mail Service. He carried mail on horseback from New Castle, Pennsylvania, to Youngstown, Ohio. He married Lucy Miller.

In 1844 the family again moved via the water route and landed at Peru, Illinois. George purchased a yoke of oxen and wagon and arrived at a spot where Elman Pohl now lives. They purchased this ground and farmed it for years, in fact, George farmed during his entire life. The Gheer Girls could remember various times when the friendly Indian, Chief Shabbona, would stop at their farm to purchase chickens to eat.

Both George and Mrs. Gheer are buried in Restland Cemetery.

Descendants living in this vicinity are the Prescott brothers, children of the late Elmer Blackwood, and Miss Mabel Smith of Sodus, N. Y.

## REUBEN HIRAM WIXOM

REUBEN HIRAM WIXOM and Clarissa Walker were married in 1803 in New York state, moved to Franklin Co., Ohio, and in the 1830's to Illinois. They went first to Tazewell county, later to La-

Salle County. They had nine sons and three daughters — but some of the sons didn't come to Illinois. Jesse, Henry, and Chancy lived not far from Mendota. One daughter Nancy married a Mr. Foster and lived in Mendota for a time, then moved west, and finally to Hastings, Nebraska.

Henry and Chancy went to California, overland at the time of the "gold rush". Chancy returned part of the way by ship, travelled by pack-train over the Isthmus of Panama and continued by ship. Henry came home later by sailing around "The Horn". Reuben Hiram Wixom and Clarissa are buried in the Dewey burying ground, northwest of Triumph — with an iron fence around their graves and markers.

## OSCAR D. F. CONKEY

OSCAR D. F. CONKEY was born in Martinsburg, New York in 1821. In 1843 he came to the west by way of Milwaukee and spent one winter in Milwaukee and two summers and a winter in Batavia, Illinois. He then went to Massillon, Ohio, where he operated a line of boats on the canal until the fall of 1853.

At that time he returned to the west on a prospecting tour, and, being pleased with the country around the present town of Mendota, decided to locate here. From 1857 until 1888 he gave his entire attention to buying, selling, and shipping grain, after which he became engaged in the coal business. The Burlington Railroad was then in the course of construction. He purchased land and the following summer (1854) he brought his family and became a permanent resident of Mendota. For about three years he was in the grain and general merchandising business. Then he became interested in the coal business, which his son, Harry, carried on. This business expanded into the present Conkey enterprise located in the southwest section of Mendota. Mr. O. D. F. Conkey died in 1914. He was active in civic life and in the Presbyterian Church.

## GEORGE E. WILLS

GEORGE E. WILLS came to Mendota from Jackson Co., Iowa, in 1855. He taught school in the winter and worked on farms in the summer. He assisted James Henderson in establishing the seminary on Thirteenth Avenue, in which he also became a student. In 1856 he took up farming on a farm west of the limits of Mendota. Later he moved to a farm south of town. He served as president and director of the Mendota Union Fair Association, road commissioner for twelve



years and township assessor for one term. Mr. Chester Wills is the grandson of Mr. George E. Wills.

## FRANZ MEISENBACH

FRANZ MEISENBACH was a tanner and currier by trade. In 1853 he came to Mendota, just as it was starting into existence, on the completion of the two great railroads at this point. He was therefore a pioneer and one of the fathers of the city.

On his arrival here Mr. Meisenbach opened a hotel on what is now Main Street and boarded the railroad men employed in the construction of the tracks. Later he entered mercantile business in the line of groceries, boots and shoes, clothing, dry goods, etc.; for a short time he also conducted a tannery. He had meanwhile great ambition for the growth of the town and did much to enhance the value of property here. He established the first German newspaper in Mendota and LaSalle county — a paper by the name of Mendota Democrat which advocated the doctrines of Stephen A. Douglas. He continued to edit this paper until his death February 16, 1889. His daughter, Ellen, was the first child born in Mendota.

## GEORGE HOLLAND

GEORGE HOLLAND, a hardware merchant of Mendota, came to Mendota in 1856, at the age of three years. His father worked at his trade of plasterer and mason. At the age of fifteen, George began work as a clerk in the hardware store of Hodge Brothers, and later accepted a clerkship with Curtis and Rude. Mr. Holland was elected to the office of city clerk in 1885 and held the office continuously for many years. In 1897 he became sole owner of the hardware store located on Main Street which today is owned and managed by his daughter, Gertrude, and her husband, James Nuckley. Mr. Holland died in 1933.

## JOHN FOULK

JOHN FOULK, born in Pennsylvania in 1820, came to Mendota via covered wagon from Dalton, Ohio, in 1856; while there he lived among the Wyandotte Indians. The family resided in Mendota at several intervals but were chiefly farmers. Fellow travellers from Ohio frequented the Foulk residence north of town for several days at a time, where wild turkey and mince pie were the main bill of fare, a fore-runner of house parties.

Mr. Foulk died when 85, and his two children, Mary Foulk Smith and Frank, long residents of Mendota, each lived to be 93.

## THOMAS IMUS

THE VENERABLE GENTLEMAN whose name heads this sketch came from Vermont to Mendota in 1856. He marked the town's growth from its infancy. At the time he arrived it had only one store, that owned by Guiles and Wells. He established the first marble shop in Mendota, and continued in business until succeeded by his son, Newton, who served as mayor for many years. Thomas Imus was a Whig, later joining the Republican party when it was organized. He was a believer in the abolition of slavery, and in the years before the Civil War was a "conductor" of the "Underground Railroad."

## ANTHONY ERLNBORN

ANTHONY ERLNBORN was born in 1834 in Koblenz, Germany. He migrated to the United States in 1853 and came shortly thereafter to Mendota. He and his brother, J. M., started the Germania Bank in 1874. Anthony died in 1876. Descendants of Anthony Erlenborn were the late Mrs. Adam Kliyla, daughter, and Julius O. Kliyla, (deceased) grandson.

## LUKE GOODWIN

LUKE GOODWIN, native of Sheffield, England, came to America in 1851 to establish a home and industry in the "Land of Promise" as America was known. Landing at New Orleans, he came northward, finally landing at Mendota. When he was established in business and had acquired a small house he sent for his wife and three year old daughter. The plant proved successful and most of the brick buildings here were furnished with brick from the Goodwin brick yards, located on what is now First Street. The family grew so that in time a larger house was needed; a brick structure which still stands at First avenue just east of the C. B. & Q. viaduct. The entire family grew to manhood and womanhood in this home and with one exception have been lifetime citizens of the hometown. The brick house is seventy-nine years old.

## PHILIP ROGERS FAMILY

PHILIP ROGERS, born in Cazenovia, New York in 1803, married Harriet Howard in 1822. Together they migrated via covered wagon both to Ohio state where they spent several years and to their prairie home one mile east of Mendota in 1839. According to early newspaper accounts they were the fourth family to settle in Mendota Township and

Mrs. Rogers was one of the organizers of the small group that later grew into the Mendota Methodist Church.

At the age of 28 Mr. Rogers died of cholera in LaSalle; his body being consumed by the quick lime method used to prevent disease spread.

The six children, B. Stephen, Burnum, Patty Ann, Lewis, Maria and Walter were raised by the widow who was known for miles around for her work as a midwife.

Only two children left descendants: Stephen married Catherine Van Patter of Elmira, Canada, in 1851, and fathered Charles Rogers, several times mayor of Mendota, Harriett Rogers Minot, Elsie Rogers Nolan, Edgar Rogers, and Clara Rogers Stone. Descendants living in this vicinity are Clara Nolan Gilman of Sandwich, Alfred Nolan and Ethel Stone Setchell and their children and grandchildren.

Walter Rogers married Abbie Resdon in 1871, their children being Mable Rogers Ludden, Philip Rogers, Jack Rogers, Leslie Rogers and Lola Rogers Gross. The latter, Leslie Rogers, his three sons and three daughters and their children also reside in Mendota community.

## SAMUEL G. DUDGEON

SAMUEL G. DUDGEON, a cousin of General U. S. Grant, passed his boyhood in Moorefield, Ohio, learning the carpenter trade. He arrived in Mendota, May 11, 1854, having walked part of the way from Ohio, liked Mendota and decided to locate here. First a carpenter, he opened a lumber yard in 1889. He later became a builder and many of the business blocks and houses in Mendota were built by him. He was elected mayor in 1890, and was an alderman for nine years, also assessor and collector. He died in 1902 at the home he built at the corner of Jefferson and Indiana. There were six children.

## HENRY OETTINGER

HENRY OETTINGER, grandfather of Mrs. Edgar Koerper and Mrs. Robert S. Black, came to Mendota early in 1852. His home was built on the lot directly west of the Holy Cross Church. The land on which the church and school now stand was a swamp and was used by Mr. Oettinger for raising ducks and geese. He engaged in the butchering business, carrying his products to homes by means of a two wheeled push cart. Later he bought a horse and wagon, making that part of his work much easier. A number of years later he opened a meat market in the town section where he remained until he retired.

He was married to Babbette Meyer, a native of Alsace-Lorraine. To them were born a son and daughter; the son, Henry Oettinger, was a jeweler and cabinet maker by trade. He was also a pianist of some note, having played for the famous team, Julia Marlowe and Ed. Southern while they were in vaudeville.

Mr. and Mrs. Edgar Koerper live in the house, part of which was the original home.

## DEMAS LINDLEY HARRIS

DEMAS LINDLEY HARRIS was born in 1818 in Tuscarawas Township, Stark County, Ohio. He was of English and Scotch ancestry, his maternal grandmother being of the family of Alexander Hamilton, and his grandfather was a Jersey Minute Man in the Revolutionary war. His father settled in Stark County, when Canton had only three or four cabins and Massillon was an impassable swamp. Mr. Harris married Anne Louise Eyles of Wadsworth, Ohio, in 1843, and they had five children — Viola M. Merrifield, mother of Mrs. E. A. Walker and grandmother of Claire Walker of Mendota, Ill.; Madison, Frank, Cora, and Claire, mother of Fred Edgcomb of Daytona Beach, Fla., and Dr. J. H. Edgcomb, lately of Ottawa.

Mr. Harris emigrated overland to California in 1850 in a covered wagon, returning by water and the Isthmus of Panama in 1852, crossing the Isthmus on a mule. While in California he worked the Rough and Ready Mine near Sacramento and also represented Nevada county at the first State Convention. He was the Whig candidate for the legislature the year that California became a state. He failed by 12 votes of an election.

He bought a farm eight miles north of Mendota, LaSalle county, Illinois and moved there in 1856. He built a granary and straw barn and sent for the family. They lived in the granary until they could get a house built. The family resided there for twenty years. John Hamilton Harris, an older brother had preceded him by two years to Mendota; a brother-in-law, R. N. Woods and a niece of Mrs. Harris', Mrs. Juliette Smith and their families had followed him.

Mr. Harris held various township offices, being Supervisor for five consecutive years in Lee county. During the Civil War he kept the supplies rushing from the farms to the front for the army and in 1862, during the darkest period of the war, he was in Springfield representing Lee county in the legislature. After the demise of the Whig Party he joined the new Republican Party which he loyally served as long as he lived.

In 1876 he and the family moved to Mendota, buying the old



Lawson Scott home on fifth street next to the home of his brother-in-law, R. N. Woods. His wife's niece, Mrs. Juliette Smith lived next door east in a house her son Will had built for her and there the three families lived until their deaths.

Mr. Harris continued to be interested in civic affairs as long as he lived; had a fine library for his day, which he enjoyed reading. He was alderman of Mendota in 1881 and on, and while filling that office he was on the committee in charge of installing the Mendota Waterworks. He also had charge of the sheep when Mendota had its first Agricultural Fair. He was raised a Methodist but later attended the Baptist church with his family, first in Sublette and then in Mendota. He died August 6, 1889, at the age of 81.

## JOSEPH WORSLEY

JOSEPH WORSLEY was born in Lincolnshire, England, in 1785, the second son of a wealthy family. One member of the family was Lord Richard Worsley; one palatial residence was known as "Worsley Hall". When Joseph was 19 years of age he came to the United States by sailing vessel, the voyage lasting three months. He landed at Baltimore, then went to Washington, D.C. where he met and later married Miss Suzannah Wetzel, the daughter of a rich Virginia planter and slave owner.

They came to Illinois, and purchased a farm from the government in 1834. This farm has been owned by Worsleys into the fourth generation. Eight children were born to them. Joseph died at the age of 86.

## HARTLEY J. SETCHELL

HARTLEY J. SETCHELL, one of the pioneer settlers east of Mendota, was born in Warsboys, Huntingdonshire, England, July 4, 1811. He was one of a family of eleven children. He and two brothers started for America in 1832. Cholera broke out on the ship, and his brothers died and were buried at sea.

He carried mail on the Pony Express for some time; then met and married Amanda Goddard in the year 1844. They established a home on the land he purchased from the government where they raised a family of eight children. There are now nearly 100 direct descendants of this family. Their first home was cut and split out of timber, put together with wood pins in place of nails. They lived in this house until 1856, then built a stone house which has just recently been cleared away. Glenn Setchell has built a modern home on the site.

Mr. Setchell, being of a progressive and inventive mind, had one of the first threshing machines and power wood saws in the community. The saw was run by horse power, on which, at times, twelve horses were used; also a saw powered by wind which he made and assembled, using a wagon wheel and stove pipe, flattened, and fastened to the spokes. When the wind was strong enough, it turned the wheel and cut their wood for heating purposes.

Messrs. Earl, Harry, Mark, Glenn, Clifford, and Webster (deceased), and Mrs. Fred Rambeau (Leila) of Ames, Iowa, are grandchildren of this venerated gentleman.

## BENARON BRIGGS

BOTH BENARON BRIGGS and Adelia Goddard were born in Connecticut and each came as young pioneers into "the west" — LaSalle County, Illinois. Adelia Goddard's father was the village blacksmith in "Homer" — now Troy Grove, Illinois. Adelia was a school teacher. The young people became acquainted here, and later were married. They bought a farm located four miles southeast of Mendota, lived and died there.

Five children were born to them; two died at a very early age. The other three all became teachers. The eldest, Ellen, became the wife of Frederick Wetzel Worsley II.

The Briggs family originally came from Salle, England. Clement Briggs joined the Plymouth Colony. The Briggs history includes the fact that Benaron's three uncles, William, Isaac and Clement Briggs were soldiers in the Revolutionary War. Clement Briggs was an officer in George Washington's guard.

## WILLIAM TRUMAN

MR. AND MRS. WILLIAM TRUMAN (Mary Taylor), both born in Lincolnshire, England, located in LaSalle in 1852. Mr. Truman learned the baker and confectioner trade and devoted his time to this calling for many years. They moved to Mendota in 1855, establishing a bakery in the building now occupied by the East Side Cafe on Sixth Street.

Mr. Truman purchased 300 acres of land north of Mendota and made a specialty of raising shorthorn cattle. Forty acres he sold at \$300.00 an acre later became known as the "railroad pond", now Lake Mendota.

Seven children were born to this union. One son, William R. Truman married Miss Bertha Boslough. Their children are Mrs.

Burton Edwards (Greta), Mrs. Tracy Tower (Theo) and William Truman, Jr.

Youngest daughter, Mrs. R. N. Crawford (Mary E.), has three children, Mrs. Mary Crawford Hunter, R. N. Crawford, Jr., and Mrs. W. F. James (Esther).

Mr. Truman passed away in 1899 and Mrs. Truman in 1913.

## CHARLES CRAWFORD

MR. AND MRS. CHARLES CRAWFORD (Mary A. Liscom), the former a native of Massachusetts and the latter from Vermont, were married in Vermont and came to Illinois in 1849, settling in Bureau County where they engaged in farming. They remained in that locality for 20 years and then moved to LaSalle County, a short distance west of Mendota, where they continued to live. Mr. Crawford passed away in 1877.

Robert N. Crawford, the youngest of seven children, was married to Miss Mary E. Truman, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. William Truman, in 1892. To this union were born three children, Mrs. Mary Crawford Hunter, Robert N. Crawford, Jr. and Mrs. W. F. James (Esther). Mrs. Charles Crawford passed away February 10, 1905 at age of 80 years. Other children, Charles H. Crawford, Mrs. James Moore (Susan), Mrs. E. H. Gheer (Georgia) all deceased.

## REV. DAVID HARBAUGH

REV. DAVID HARBAUGH was born in Waynesboro, Pa.; was ordained a Lutheran minister at Wittenberg Synod in 1851. While serving a pastorate in Dixon, Illinois, he organized and was connected with Mendota College at Mendota, Illinois, for thirteen years. He married Margaret Augustine in 1849, and later moved to Mendota, where eight of his 12 children were born. The "Harbaugh" addition to Mendota, west of the Township High School, bears his name.

## JOHN HAMILTON HARRIS

JOHN HAMILTON HARRIS was born in Amesville County, Pennsylvania August 19, 1807. In 1809 he emigrated with his father's family to the "New Purchase" in Ohio where they cleared a farm in the wilderness. While a young man he entered the law office of his uncle, Judge John Harris, of Canton, Ohio, and in 1829 was licensed as an attorney.

He married Harriet Fogle of Canton; in 1854 the family moved to Illinois, locating on a farm on the ridge, two and one-half miles north of Mendota on the Cemetery road.

While still farming he opened a law office in Mendota, driving to town and bringing his two older daughters to Lutheran College.

In 1863, the family moved to Mendota where he held many city and county offices. Mr. Harris was a member of the Methodist church, a Knight Templar in Masonry, and proud of the fact that he signed the Washingtonian pledge against the use of liquors and tobacco.

His two older daughters died of typhoid, leaving only the youngest, Mary, who married Collins Harbaugh. Mr. Harris died in 1894; his wife, who was blind for fifteen years, died in 1895, in the home of Collins and Mary Harbaugh, at the corner of Ninth street and Fifth avenue where their daughter, Fredericka A., now lives.

## MR. AND MRS. BENTON PARKS

ONE OF THE EARLY families of Mendota was the Parks family, grandparents of Frank Parks. Mr. and Mrs. Benton Parks lived in the north end of Mendota, the property now known as the "Y", and ran a boarding house when the C.B.&Q. railroad was built through Mendota. Mr. Parks and son, James, ran a draying business. Mr. and Mrs. Parks had four children, Mrs. Sam (Mary) Dudgeon, Sr.; Mrs. Fronie Harding; Mrs. Homer (Jennie) Munson and James Parks. Mr. Benton Parks died in 1880.

## JOHN E. MILLER

JOHN E. MILLER was born in Vermont in 1826 and came to Mendota in 1851. He bought a 180 acre farm in Clarion Township from the government, paying five dollars an acre for it. In 1864 he bought a farm two miles west of Mendota, which has been the family home ever since. Mr. Miller married Elmina Ballou, whose ancestors came to America in 1646. Mr. and Mrs. Miller had three sons, all deceased. Mrs. Miller died in 1897 and Mr. Miller in 1902. After his death his son Dana and family lived on the home place until his death in 1931. Mrs. Miller and daughter Edith still reside there.

## SYLVESTER WALKER

AN EARLY RESIDENT of Mendota was Sylvester Walker, born in Wilton, Maine, March 21, 1826, the youngest of a family of eleven children.

In 1856, at the age of 30, he moved with his wife to Earlville, and, after residing there a short time, came to Mendota. For 16 years they made their home in the north section of the city, Mr. Walker working as a carpenter. Later he farmed near Meriden for a number of years and after 46 years absence returned to his birthplace in Maine.



While he was living in Mendota, his nephew, Joseph, came from his home in East Wilton, Maine, and obtained employment working on farms in this vicinity. He married Abbie Ballard, whose family had come to Illinois from Massachusetts; to this union were born four children, two of whom still reside in Mendota: E. A. Walker, and Grace, now Mrs. Archie Spenader. A brother of these two, Harry B. Walker, resides in Vancouver, Washington.

## DR. W. J. COOK

DR. W. J. COOK came to Mendota in 1854 from Virginia because of his objection to slavery, and was joined shortly thereafter by his son, Edgar Pumphrey Cook, who practiced medicine in Mendota 50 years. He had three sons: William, who was a florist in Mendota for many years; David, a lawyer, postmaster, and alderman who was interested in civic affairs, but later he moved to Ottawa; and John, who died from wounds incurred during the Civil War.

## HENRY H. EBY

HENRY H. EBY was born in Lebanon County, Pennsylvania, September 8, 1841. In 1850 his father, mother, four sisters and Henry started for Illinois and after an eventful trip of about six weeks, reached Mendota and settled on a farm east of the future city.

On the outbreak of the Rebellion, he enlisted in the three-months service in the Twelfth Illinois Infantry.

After the expiration of his term of enlistment, he re-enlisted in Company C, Seventh Illinois Cavalry, and participated in a number of severe engagements, including Stone River and Chickamauga, serving as orderly for General John M. Palmer. He was taken prisoner, having entered the Confederate lines by mistake. Mr. Eby was in active service three years and five months, except while a prisoner. A book by Mr. Eby, relating his war experiences, is in the Public Library.

## FREDERICK AND MARGARET BEETZ

FREDERICK AND MARGARET BEETZ immigrated from Germany to New York City in 1838; in 1846 they moved to Chicago. Frederick Beetz walked from Chicago to Perkins Grove on a tour of investigation to learn first hand what the situation was; finding it good, he brought his family with him by stagecoach in 1846.

The first winter they lived in a deserted sheep barn built of logs. In 1849, Frederick Beetz bought a few acres of land and built his own log house. A son, George, was born to them in 1852. In 1870, they

removed to the farm north of Mendota which is owned by Daniel G. Beetz. Samuel, Ezra, Daniel Beetz and Ivie (Mrs. Albert Ultch) and Myrtle (Mrs. Roy Yenerich, deceased), are the children of George Beetz.

## SIMPSON CLARK

SIMPSON CLARK was born in New Hampshire in 1806 and came to Mendota with his wife and daughter, Mathilda, in 1854. He was employed at railroad building. They resided in Mendota for nine years and then took up farming in Troy Grove. Thirty years later he retired and moved back to Mendota. Mr. Clark united with the Baptist Church. He was a leader in civic affairs and served as constable and deputy sheriff in LaSalle County before he moved to Troy Grove.

## EDWIN A. BOWEN

EDWIN A. BOWEN moved to Perkins Grove with his parents when he was a child of three, in about 1845. He entered the civil war a captain and was promoted to colonel, returning to Mendota in 1865 to become president of the newly organized First National bank.

Col. Bowen owned a small gold mine in Colorado from 1858 to 1861 which proved very successful. The Bowens had one of the most beautifully furnished homes in Mendota, and their crystal chandeliers are still a topic of conversation for those who remember. He was a familiar figure, being driven to and from his work in a fawn-colored carriage, complete with fringe, drawn by a fine span of horses, by old colored Amos Miller, a freed slave. He is remembered as a very religious, stern but just family man, and a more than liberal donor to the Baptist church.

## R. N. WOODS

R. N. WOODS, according to a colorful account by his daughter, Mary R. Woods Lawrence, left his home in northern Ohio and set out in 1857 to migrate to the vicinity of Mendota. He bought a farm about nine miles north of Mendota and later moved with his family into town.

His glowing letters to his family back home described the beautiful rolling prairies but never mentioned the lack of trees, fierce winds, or lack of roads. A gimlet hole bored through the siding of their home provided an opportunity of apprehending the identity of a caller, who might be a friendly Indian or a timely peddler. The home was lighted by tallow candles, which they made themselves. They sheared their

sheep and carded and spun the wool, woven into cloth and blankets at the Dayton woolen mill.

Mr. Woods and Lindley Harris were prime movers in laying out and building roads, which many farmers vehemently opposed at the time. Their herd of 30 cattle was driven three miles to Melugin's Grove milldam, twice weekly, for water. The land was fenceless and was common grazing land. Later the Woods and Harris children attended school in Mendota, boarding themselves with Mrs. Phileo, a remarkable woman who in her younger days was a co-worker of William Lloyd Garrison, the abolitionist.

A sister of Mrs. Lawrence, Villie Woods, was principal of the Mendota East Side school. The family moved to Mendota in 1870, living in the home now occupied by John Woods.

## JOHN C. MADDEN

JOHN C. MADDEN came to Mendota in 1853. He was born in Bandon, County Cork, Ireland in 1830, and lived in Tauton, Mass. as a child. He farmed four miles north of Mendota until 1858 when he became a partner of his brother-in-law, Peter Donohue, establishing the foundry and machine shop of Donohue & Madden.

John C. Madden was the grandfather of Mrs. Dan C. Haskell, Mrs. John Gallagher, and Miss Mabel Madden, and the great-grandfather of Mrs. Paul K. Jacob, all of Mendota.

Peter Donohue, his partner, was the grandfather of Miss Patricia Donohue, Peter J. Donohue and Mrs. James Caveglia, all of Mendota.

## NATHAN DENISON

NATHAN DENISON came to Mendota in the early summer of 1854. He was favorably impressed with the situation of the village and the surrounding farm lands and saw the great need of a place of worship — there was no church. He had been a farmer before he married Silence Stoddard in Sutton, Vermont and did not study for the ministry for several years. He returned to Skaneateles, New York and resigned as pastor of the Baptist Church there and, with his family, came to Mendota to make his future home.

He died shortly after organizing a church. There was no cemetery here, so he was buried in LaMoille but as soon as one was started here his body was brought back. His tombstone is one of the oldest in Restland — a pulpit with Bible and hymn book.

The two older daughters, Adeline and Eliza taught in the first school.

Oscar Denison, the oldest son, bought the farm next to the A. C. McIntire farm. He married Margaret Blair of Hardwick, Vermont, and they lived on that farm until after their sixth son was born, then moved to Oakland, California. J. C. moved to Chicago and became secretary and treasurer of the Union Stock & Transfer Co. (old stock yards), Henry and Nathan went into business in Elgin, Mary married Frank Lousley of Mendota, and after his death became editor and publisher of the *Englewood Eye*. Of the nine children George S. was the only one who remained in Mendota. Frank, the youngest child, is still living in Milton, Oregon, and will be 101 years old August 17, 1953.

## CLARK LAMB

CLARK LAMB came to Mendota in 1856 from Hardwick, Vermont and farmed the land across the road from the Oscar Denison farm — now the Beiser farm. He married Eliza Denison. They had five children. In those days the winters were very severe and the snow very deep and roads completely covered so they drove to town in a direct line, making their own road passing over fences. The Lamb family moved to Red Oak, Iowa.

## E. B. CARPENTER

E. B. CARPENTER, with his wife, Tabitha, and children, Caroline, Edwin, and Harriet, came to Illinois in 1858. As they came for his health, they settled in the country near LaMoille for a time and later moved to Mendota. He was one of the early manufacturers of organs in America. He organized the Carpenter Organ Company in Mendota and built the factory on the corner of Eleventh and Sixth Street. He also built the home on Sixth Street in 1868. After he sold his share in the factory he moved back to Brattleboro, Vermont.

## PETER KONEN

BORN IN 1815 AT ERNSDORF, Luxemburg, he helped lay track when the Illinois Central was built, and stayed at Mendota as section foreman. His first home was the second house built in Mendota. The house was originally on lower Sixth Ave. near St. Mary's Church, but was later moved to 707 Sixth Ave., where it remained until 1922 when it was replaced by the present house. He died in 1892, leaving six children: Mary (Mrs. A. P. Wise), Margaret (Mrs. Ziebarth), Elizabeth (Mrs. Etienne Pink), Josephine (Mrs. Feltes), Frank, and Nickolas.



## GEORGE W. RHEA

GEORGE W. RHEA was born in 1812 near Clarion, Pennsylvania. He worked on the Erie Canal. When the Illinois-Michigan Canal opened up, he came to Utica in 1844. He operated a canal barge for a couple of years, then bought a farm northeast of Mendota. He married Mattie Lamb (1836-1873) of Hagerstown, Maryland. When the Civil War began, he enlisted in a Pennsylvania regiment and when the war ended was in a Southern prison camp. Rhea died in 1898.

They had five children: Ethel, who died in infancy, Estella (Mrs. Otto Foerster, Euphemia (Prema) Mrs. John Crawford, Robert, and Samuel L.

## ETIENNE PINK

ETIENNE PINK was born March 5, 1835, at Bonart, Belgium. He spent several years in school in Paris. When the Belgian colony settled near La Salle, he came to visit friends. He began farming near Peters-town in 1857, and married Elizabeth Konen in 1862. They had thirteen children. Only three lived to maturity. Mary (Mrs. Bernard Pink), Margaret (Mrs. Samuel L. Rhea), and Frank. Later he moved to Mendota and lived at the corner of Second Street and Eighth Avenue. He bought hides and tallow. He made soap and candles. He was elected city assessor several times. He died November 6, 1911. His wife died February 3, 1918.

## JACOB FRITZ

JACOB FRITZ, dealer in boots and shoes, was born in Germany, June 5, 1824. He learned the shoemaker's trade in his native country, and for 15 years worked as a journeyman. He came to the United States in 1853 and, after several years in Michigan, located in Mendota in April 1857. Here he continued in the shoe business which was later carried on by his son, Gustave. Jacob Fritz was also the father of Frank Fritz, a prominent Mendota druggist.

## ABRAM ANDRESS

ABRAM ANDRESS was born in Pennsylvania in 1801, and brought his family to Mendota Township in 1850. He purchased 520 acres of land, and when the city of Mendota was laid out sold 320 acres. One of his sons, Charles, was a Lieutenant-Colonel during the Civil War and had command of the regiment on Sherman's march to the sea.

Another son, Dorsey C. Andress, also served the entire period of the Civil War. He participated in thirty-one battles, beginning with

Shiloh and ending with Bentonville, N. C. He returned to Mendota, entered business with his father, farmed for four years, and then engaged in the coal business. In 1883, Dorsey Andress was appointed postmaster. He was Collector of Mendota Township for four years, and gave one-half of his commissions which built the plank walk from the city to the cemetery.

## PHILO CASTLE

PHILO CASTLE was born in Vermont in 1818. He completed his education at Sherburne Falls, Mass., and taught several winter terms of school. In the spring of 1854, he bought land in Mendota Township — later renting 34 acres to Mendota to be used as a Fair Grounds. Besides his farming interests he sold agricultural implements, served as alderman several years, was Justice of the Peace twenty years, director of the First National Bank, and secretary of the Farmers' Insurance Company. The fourth generation of the Castle family is living on the original farm of Philo Castle. It is located north of the Fair Grounds.

## PHINEAS B. RUST

PHINEAS B. RUST, JR. came from Ohio via the Ohio, Mississippi, and Illinois Rivers to Peru in 1835. He took up some land near the present site of LaMoille, on which he lived until 1853 when the railroad was completed to Mendota. Thinking it a good site for a flourishing town, Mr. Rust left the farm and located here. He built the first brick building in Mendota known as the Rust Block which today is at the corner of Washington Street and Illinois Avenue.

Phineas served almost three years as a captain in the Civil War. After his discharge he settled in Kansas.

Israel Rust, brother of Phineas, came to Mendota in 1855 and worked with his brother in the land office for several years. In 1858, he settled on a tract of railroad land which he improved and made a valuable farm. He retired from the farm in 1875 and built a residence in the north part of town — today called Rust's Addition.

## GABRIEL POHL

GABRIEL POHL, born in Saxe Coburg, Germany, July 15, 1825, came to Mendota from Clarion Township in 1853. He built a residence at the corner of Main and Jefferson Streets, and in it, for some time, kept a small grocery store. Later he kept a boarding house in his home. In 1868, he erected a large brick building on the site at the

cost of \$14,000. In this building the post office was kept eleven years. Mr. Pohl opened the first livery stable in Mendota in 1857. In addition to his valuable city property he owned a pleasant home of ten acres on the east side of the city. Third generation descendants of Mr. and Mrs. Pohl living in Mendota are Gabriel and Karl Pohl.

## BENJAMIN MOSS

BENJAMIN MOSS, HORTICULTURIST, was born in Essex County, England, in 1833. In his youth, he was apprenticed to the harness-maker's trade. That was too confining so he took up piano making for about five or six years. In 1856, he and Mrs. Moss came to the United States, and after several weeks in Rockford came to Mendota to make their home. He owned three acres of land and worked three more, raising small fruits, flowers and vegetables.

He had two greenhouses, one 12x32 feet and the other 16x32 feet in size. These probably were the first greenhouses in Mendota. Descendants of Mr. Moss now living in Mendota are Robert and William Moss and George Moore.

## DANIEL D. GUILLES

DANIEL D. GUILLES, one of the first settlers of Mendota, was born in Saratoga, New York, November 3, 1809. He was married to Eliza Ann Platt, and came to Sterling in 1837. There he opened the first hotel in the town. In 1853 he came to Mendota and built the first structure of any kind on the town plat. This was designed for a store, and was one story in height, 20x30 feet in dimensions. The site was on Main Street.

He was engaged in the mercantile business under the firm name of Guiles & Wells, putting in the first stock of goods in Mendota. They also took a contract to build three and a half miles of the Burlington road east from Mendota station. Mr. Guiles took up farming near Mendota in 1859, and remained on the farm for eight or nine years. Then he returned to Mendota where he lived until his death. Guiles Avenue in the north part of Mendota is named in honor of this pioneer.

## GEORGE HENRY YENERICH

GEORGE HENRY YENERICH I, born 1821, in Darmstadt, Germany, served seven years as a lance corporal and was discharged in 1848. Passport was issued in 1854 for himself, his wife (Mary Beiser), sons George II, and William, who died and was buried at sea. He entered the port of New York with two dollars. At sight of his adopted land,

he said, "I thank Thee, God, I'll always be a good citizen" — and he was. Born in the states were Phillip John, near Buffalo, New York and Wallace C. near LaMoille, Illinois.

He and his wife are buried in the Four Mile Grove cemetery. The Yenerich roll lists 98 descendants, who entered the various professions — many were farmers. They served their country in three wars — one fell a bombardier in Germany.

## REV. JAMES S. HENDERSON

REV. JAMES S. HENDERSON was born near Carlisle, Pa., in 1813. He planned to enter the ministry. After attending Canonsburgh College, he entered the mercantile business, because of failing health. When his health was restored, he finished his work at the Theological Seminary, in Allegheny City, Pa. He was called to a charge in Pennsylvania where he built up the church and school. In October, 1855, he located in Mendota.

The next year, 1856, he started to erect a seminary on Thirteenth Avenue (the three story property south of Prescott's Service Station). The school flourished for several years, when sickness entered the school and several died, including the Reverend Henderson (1861). He organized the Presbyterian Church in Mendota and a church in Homer, Troy Grove Township.

## DON BOWER

DON BOWER lived one block directly east of Lincoln School for many years before he died in 1951 when he was 101 years old. His mind was as clear as crystal.

His people originally came from Scotland. Their name changed slightly from the original to present Bower. He was of the same family as the present Queen of England whose people originally came from Scotland.

His people came from Wilson, New York which is located on the shore of Lake Ontario. They built a home, now located one mile south and one mile east of Meriden.

The Bowers cut wild hay that grew on top of the knolls. They cut the blue joint there, and it was very palatable. About 1853 the Bowers built a house with prairie hay. First they put up the rails and packed hay against the sides. They put coarse hay on the roof. It had only one room. His mother said she "never wintered warmer". The next spring 1854 his father built a prairie shanty and a one steaded bed with only one leg. Five or six children would sleep in it.



Mr. Bower said that they planted corn by dropping corn by hand all over a field marked off by a team. He was paid 25 cents a day for dropping corn. He broadcast wheat by hand.

## LAWSON SCOTT

LAWSON SCOTT migrated from Ohio to Mendota in 1856, having brought farm horses to this area for breaking up the rich but tough prairie land. No oxen were used for this purpose. He married Mary Belle Barnahan, of Cadiz, Ohio, and the newlyweds lived at first in the Passenger House, later in a cottage on Fifth street just east of Thirteenth avenue. Later they moved eastward on the same street.

Of the five children born, one was Lee C. Scott, who now lives in Los Angeles. Aged 88, he has written delightfully of early happenings in Mendota, including the Indian trails and of his neighbor, George Jacks, who fought with General Custer in the Indian wars. His father carried on a thriving farm machinery business here and remembers the years the children used as a playhouse an old hearse which his father bought and set up in the backyard.

He tells of skating on "Dickie Peart's pond" and of his work in Harbaugh's grocery store, and later for the Burlington railroad. One day Paul Morton, assistant general freight agent for the Burlington and later secretary of the navy under President Theodore Roosevelt, stepped off the train in Mendota and asked if they had a boy who wrote a good hand.

Lee Scott was recommended, and given a pass to Chicago where he worked in the Burlington offices for many years, writing tariff sheets so clearly and so regularly that his writing was often likened to engraved letters. His letters to your historians, written at age 88, still reflect beautiful handwriting. Many of his recollections appear in other parts of this history.

## THE DANIEL FAHLER FAMILY

DANIEL FAHLER and his family migrated from Lebanon County, Pennsylvania, to a farm located between Homer (Troy Grove) and Mendota in 1849. They came by canal boat to the Alleghany mountains where the boat was taken apart and hauled over the mountains. When they reached the Ohio River, it was put together again for their journey down the Ohio to Cairo, Illinois. From there, the Fahler family made their way up the Mississippi and Illinois rivers to Peru. An ox team took them the last miles to Homer.

Mr. Fahler remembered when land north of Homer sold for \$2.50 an acre. The Indians used one place on his farm for shelter from the

biting winter blasts. Mr. Fahler well remembered the team of spotted ponies which belonged to Chief Shabbona.

The children of Daniel and Maria Fahler were Levi, Elizabeth (Deaner), John, Mose, Mary (Dowling), and Lydia (Clay). Levi was the father of William and Martin Fahler, both now deceased. William's children were Eva (Mann), Russell (deceased), Elnora (Near) and Winnifred (Rempher). Descendants of Martin Fahler are Forrest, Harry, and Atheda (Widmer). Today the Fahlers are in their sixth generation in Mendota.

## GEORGE PHILIP YOST

EARLY IN THE YEAR 1849, George Philip Yost immigrated to the United States from Germany with his family of four children: John Philip Yost, Philip Jacob Yost, John Caspar Yost, and Elizabeth Catherine Yost. They landed in New Orleans, then came up the Mississippi and Illinois rivers to La Salle. Only two days after arriving there, the father died of cholera.

The children settled on farms in Mendota township and married. John Philip had 10 children, Philip Jacob had 11 children, one by a second marriage, and John Caspar had 11 children.

One of the best remembered is John Yost, eldest son of Philip Jacob Yost. After farming, he moved to Mendota. He conducted an implement business starting about 1888, first with Louis Knauer, on Jefferson street, and later with Fred Oester, on Illinois avenue.

Other children of Philip Yost were Katie, Caroline, Margaret, Marie, Conrad, George H., Eva, and Magdalene, all now deceased.

Descendants from these are legion in this community.

## S. J. HAIGHT

S. J. HAIGHT was born in Meriden Township at the end of 1845 and spent his boyhood on his parents' farm. He was educated in the country school there, and later attended Lombard college, but had to give it up because of poor health. After spending two years traveling through Central America and California, he returned to this vicinity and married Mary Ann Hoffman Wisner.

Mary was born in Peru in 1843 and came to Mendota Township with her family in 1854.

S. J. and Mary Haight had five children. Two girls died in infancy and the other three children were Samuel John, Mrs. William MacKnight, and Harry William. S. J. Haight Jr. was the father of Charles Haight, Meriden; and of Grace Haight McCray and Samuel Haight, both formerly of Mendota.

# THE HUMAN URGE

SINCE THE BEGINNING of time the one great urge of human kind has been to assemble themselves together.

From these assemblings have sprung numerous organizations with various objectives from unity-projections to purely social.

Mendota in her founding and growth has felt that urge keenly through the years. So we find her, "The World's Greatest Little City", with many organized groups, each a loyal part of the whole.

## FAIR ASSOCIATION

TWENTY ACRES of the present site of the Tri-County fairgrounds was first leased from the Castle farm in 1873. In that year under the guidance of Simon Lee and A. T. H. Newport a racing association was founded and the place was called the Mendota Driving Park. This group later purchased the grounds and held race meets until about 1882 and then abandoned it for several years.

The next organization formed was the Union Agricultural fair, holding a fair each autumn. This group fell into hard times; so they just held fairs and race meets intermittently until about 1905 or 1906 when the grounds were sold to a new group which held only racing meets during the summer. This group belonged to the "Little Grand Circuit" and some of the nation's best pacers and trotters ran

on the tracks during this time. High operation costs, bad weather, etc. forced this group to "give up the ghost" after several years.

The grounds and buildings stood idle again until about 1915, at which time the Mendota Agricultural fair was rejuvenated and a tent fair was held for about three years. This was again abandoned until 1921, when a new corporation was formed and an additional six acres joining the grounds on the north was purchased. A new floral hall, cattle barn, and comfort station were built. Fairs were held for the next five or six years until the association again ran onto the financial rock and the note-holders took possession of the grounds. After this junior fairs were held for several years but nothing of importance was done to improve the grounds or revive a fair.

In 1939 the Lions club leased the grounds and held fairs until 1942, but dropped the project on account of World War II.

In 1945 the note-holders decided to sell the grounds and it was purchased by a group who formed the present Tri-County Fair association. The first officers of this organization were Les Oester, Gilbert Truckenbrod, Harold Sonntag, and Paul Stenger. Since this organization has been in operation it has renovated the old buildings, put up four barns, put in a country school house for children's displays, increased seating capacity, and operated successfully; making this fair one of the best in the state. Ed. Lorack was named secretary in 1953.

## GRAVES PUBLIC LIBRARY

THE GREY STONE BUILDING in what is now known as Library Park is the fulfillment of a dream of men and women whose appreciation of reading led to the hope that by establishing a circulating library others might share that pleasure.

Early in 1870 plans were made and with a fund of only \$100 the Mendota Library association was organized under a charter issued by the secretary of state which provided for the management and control in a board of seven trustees. The first library board chose Dr. J. A. Hoffman as president, James Hunter as secretary, and E. A. Bowen as treasurer. Additional funds from the proceeds of a course of lectures and other entertainments made it possible to purchase the first installment of books.

In the winter of 1873 the project was put on a solid foundation through the generosity of Mr. and Mrs. Willard Graves who presented the association with \$2,000 in cash, an interest bearing note for \$700, and a deed to the property on which the present library is located.



There was a two-story frame building there which could be used as a library. The entire donation amounted to about \$6,000.

More interest was aroused and the Mendota Lecture society and Mendota Lyceum contributed their savings and made gifts of books. The building was put in order; 1,700 books were purchased; and a library was formally opened on the second floor of the building September 8, 1874. Dr. Moody, a dentist, was librarian.

The association had 40 members. Memberships were for life and cost \$5. By 1877 there were nearly 200 members and over 2,000 books.

In 1879, Dr. Moody retired and Miss M. C. Cook took charge.

In 1894, the first effort was made to achieve a free public library through a petition from the citizens of Mendota and a request from the board of directors. The request was unanimously granted by the city council April 13, 1894. A new board was elected as follows: Dr. E. P. Cook, president; L. B. Crooker, vice-president; Otto Keiselbach, secretary. The other members were: F. Gifford, George Dewing, William Jenkins, G. A. Kellenberger, S. E. Bede, W. R. Foster. The first free public library was opened on October 2, 1894, with Mrs. R. W. Blakeslee as librarian.

The library grew. By 1903 a new building was needed. Miss Alice Wylie, secretary, was asked to send a request to Andrew Carnegie for financial help. The request for \$10,000 was refused at first, but through the persistence of Miss Wylie the gift was finally granted and the construction began in 1904. The new building was opened to the public on February 3, 1905.

The fine building was admired by all and although library architecture has changed much since that time, Mendota can still be very proud of its library home. Due to the interest of a conscientious board of directors the building is well-cared for and additions and changes were made when necessary. Modern lighting has replaced the old fixtures and bookshelves are now on every wall.

The most recent improvement is the development of a children's room in the basement. This is a spacious, cheerful room which is a joy to all who use it. The former children's room now provides ample space for the many reference books. The library now contains approximately 16,000 books and a large collection of periodicals and pamphlets. Several departments serve the public.

The library is open every week day and three evenings, with the exception of Thursday, closing from June through September.

The management of the library is handled by a board of nine directors and two librarians as follows: Mrs. B. Harry Reck, president; B. J. Dean, vice-president; Watson P. Bartlett, secretary; Arthur Hollis-

ton, Dr. W. M. Avery, R. E. Richert, Wesley Wright, Mrs. Nano Dubbs, Miss Jessie Denison.

Sadie Wilcox is adults' department librarian and Mrs. Edna Bruckner is children's department librarian.

Sadie Wilcox has been the efficient and pleasant librarian of the library for a span of 37 years and thus has witnessed, if not inaugurated, many of the forward steps in this institution. She began her work at the library in July, 1916.

## MASONS

MENDOTA LODGE NO. 176, A.F.&A.M. is now nearly 99 years old. Its charter was issued October 3, 1855, and, as is customary for Masonic Lodges, it existed several months previous to that date under dispensation from the Grand Lodge.

In the charter issued October 3, 1855, the following were named as the three principal officers: William W. Callow, Worshipful Master; Addison T. Lyon, Senior Warden; and Joseph O. Crooker, Junior Warden.

Forty-four men have guided the destiny of the Lodge during its first 98 years. The names of these Past Masters, and the years in which they served, are as follows:

William W. Callow .... 1855	Edgar P. Cook .... 1906 and 1907
George B. Colburn .... 1856	Oscar P. Harris .... 1910, 1912 and 1913
Charles H. Gilman .... 1857, 1858, 1859 and 1861	E. A. Walker .... 1914
A. H. Davis .... 1860 and 1864	Charles W. McCray .... 1915
Joseph W. Edwards .... 1862	Harry L. Gray .... 1916
Hascal C. Bristol .... 1863	Clyde Schwartz .... 1917
John C. Corbus, Sr. .... 1865 and 1866	Harry H. Wright .... 1918
David A. Cook .... 1867, 1868, 1869, 1870, 1872, 1873 and 1874	Charles E. Merritt .... 1919
Milroy A. McKey .... 1871 and 1876	William A. McMillan .... 1920
Preston I. Davis .... 1875	Karl N. Erbes .... 1921 and 1932
William Jenkins .... 1877	Charles D. Powell .... 1922, 1925, 1933, 1934 and 1935
George W. Tewksbury .... 1878	Charles M. Salander .... 1923
Jacob Scheidenhelm .... 1879, 1880, 1881, 1882, 1883, 1884, 1885, 1886, 1887, 1888, 1889, 1890, 1891, 1892, 1893, 1894, 1895, 1896, 1897, 1898, 1900 and 1911	F. Paul Breuer .... 1924
Edward J. Staten .... 1899, 1901 and 1902	Theodore Schildberg .... 1926
Mathew J. Wilson .... 1903	C. Walter Jacob .... 1927 and 1928
Edwin G. McMackin .... 1904, 1905, 1908 and 1909	William F. Knauer .... 1929 and 1930
	George C. Van Meter .... 1931
	George E. Hessenberger .... 1936
	Ralph C. Jacob .... 1937 and 1938
	Glenn M. Momeny .... 1939
	James R. Mercer .... 1940

Samuel E. Le Marr .... 1941	Alexander E. Wylie .... 1946
David D. Barnett .... 1942, 1943 and 1949	Karl R. Brunner .... 1947 and 1948
Robert S. Black .... 1944 and 1945	Clifford Carr .... 1950 and 1951
	Harry A. Bryan .... 1952

Nineteen of the Past Masters of Mendota Lodge No. 176 are still members of the Lodge, all others either being deceased or having transferred to other Masonic Lodges. Those Past Masters who are still members are as follows: Messrs. Walker, McCray, Merritt, Erbes, Powell, Salander, Breuer, C. Walter Jacob, Knauer, Van Meter, Ralph C. Jacob, Momeny, Le Marr, Barnett, Black, Wylie, Brunner, Carr and Bryan.

Two other Past Masters have transferred and are now members of Mendota Lodge No. 176. They are Gerald Snyder, formerly Worshipful Master of the Lafayette Lodge and Harold B. Ebbinghaus, formerly Worshipful Master of the Sleepy Eye, Minnesota lodge.

Officers of Mendota Lodge No. 176 for the year 1953 are as follows: John D. Wheeler, Worshipful Master; Roy D. Morrill, Senior Warden; Verner E. Bolling, Junior Warden; J. A. Tapper, Treasurer; Alexander E. Wylie, Secretary; Karl N. Erbes, Chaplain; James D. Hume, Senior Deacon; Donald C. Taylor, Junior Deacon; James W. Janes, Senior Steward; Willard L. Fouts, Junior Steward; David D. Barnett, Marshal; Reynold J. Neff, Tyler.

## ROYAL ARCH MASONS

MENDOTA CHAPTER NO. 79, R. A. M. is now nearly 89 years old. Its charter was issued October 6, 1865, and, according to custom, it had existed for several months under dispensation from the Grand Royal Arch chapter at that date.

In the charter issued October 6, 1865, the following were named as the three principal officers: Charles H. Gilman, High Priest; John H. Harris, King; and George Emerson, Scribe.

No general list of Past High Priests of the Chapter is available nor could it be obtained without a careful examination of all minute books for the past eighty-eight years. The following is a list of the living Past High Priests, all of whom are still members of the chapter, and the years in which they served in office:

William R. Foster .... 1896, 1897, 1898, 1899 and 1900	Charles M. Salander .... 1941 and 1942
C. Walter Jacob .... 1926	Raymond G. Erbes .... 1943
Charles E. Merritt .... 1927, 1928, 1929, 1931, 1937, 1938, 1939 and 1940	Alexander E. Wylie .... 1944, 1948, 1949 and 1951
Karl N. Erbes .... 1930	Charles S. Merritt, Sr. .... 1945, 1946 and 1947
Ralph C. Jacob .... 1932	Harvey Cook .... 1952
E. A. Walker .... 1934, 1935, 1936 and 1950	

Charles S. Merritt, Sr. also served as High Priest of the Aurora Chapter in the year 1926.

The following are the elective officers of the Chapter for the year 1953: Ralph Miller, High Priest; Glenn M. Momeny, King; T. J. Helbig, Scribe; C. Walter Jacob, Treasurer; and William F. Knauer, Secretary.

## BETHANY COMMANDERY

BETHANY COMMANDERY No. 28, Knights Templar, was chartered by the Grand Commandery of Knights Templar of the State of Illinois October 27, 1868.

Charter members were George M. Black, George Emerson, David A. Cook, Jason R. Liscom, George F. Stannard, Wilbur F. Blomfield, James A. Church, John C. Corbus, Preston I. Davis, James B. Dawson, Joseph W. Edwards, Frederick H. Haskell, J. H. Harris, Robert L. Gilmore, Anthony B. Gould, William C. Harrington, Jason M. Liscom.

Stated conclave is held on the first Tuesday of each month with annual conclave being held in June, at which time election of officers is held and annual reports given. Present membership is 105.

Living Eminent Past Commanders: Williston F. Colson, Louis F. Knauer, Frank B. Kaufman, Charles D. Powell, Christoph W. Jacob, Jesse E. Wixom, John A. Woods, Charles E. Merritt, George M. Sowers, Raymond W. Jones, Clarence W. Potter, Charles M. Salander, Frank C. Lenihan, Charles S. Merritt, Sr., Eddy A. Walker, Charles S. Merritt, Jr.

Present officers: Willard F. Merritt, Eminent Commander; George W. Day, Generalissimo; Clifford Carr, Captain General; Ovid L. Davis, Senior Warden; Eddy A. Walker, E.P.C., Junior Warden; Raymond W. Jones, E.P.C. Prelate; Charles S. Merritt, Sr., E.P.C. Recorder; Ross A. Hotchkiss, Standard Bearer; Jesse E. Wixom, E.P.C. Sword Bearer; Ralph E. Miller, Warder; Harvey F. Cook, Color Bearer; Ray Kreiser, Sentinel.

## ORDER OF THE EASTERN STAR

AZURE CHAPTER NO. 523, O. E. S., is now nearly 50 years old. Its charter was issued October 5, 1904, but it has actually been in existence, under dispensation from the Grand Chapter, since December 2, 1903.

The following were named as the three principal officers in the Charter issued October 5, 1904:



Mrs. Lulu Smith, Worthy Matron; William R. Foster, Worthy Patron; and Mrs. Florence Lewis, Associate Matron.

Only one of the original Charter members and founders, Mrs. Theresa Kreis, still remains a member of Azure Chapter, all of the others being now deceased or transferred to other Chapters, most of them being deceased.

Forty-three Worthy Matrons and 33 Worthy Patrons presided over the chapter during the first 49 years of its existence.

The names of its Past Matrons, and the years in which they served, are as follows:

Mrs. Lulu Smith .... 1904	Mrs. Blanche Salander .... 1929
Mrs. Florence Lewis .... 1905, 1906, 1907 and 1908	Miss Gertrude Retz .... 1930
Mrs. Theresa Kreis .... 1909	Mrs. Irene Momeny .... 1931
Mrs. Ruth Harris .... 1910 and 1911	Mrs. Maude O. Eckart .... 1932
Mrs. Emma Hoffman .... 1912	Mrs. Mildred E. McCully .... 1933
Mrs. Isabella Imus .... 1913 and 1914	Mrs. Helen Trout .... 1934
Mrs. Anna Moss .... 1915	Mrs. Irma Beitsch .... 1935
Mrs. Bessie McCray .... 1916	Mrs. Marjorie Knuppel .... 1936
Mrs. Grace Merritt .... 1917	Mrs. Alma Gillette .... 1937
Mrs. Clara Grogan .... 1918	Mrs. Charlotte Betz .... 1938
Mrs. Margaret Walker .... 1919	Mrs. Marjorie Mercer .... 1939
Mrs. Clara McNutt .... 1920	Mrs. Alma E. Van Etten .... 1940
Mrs. Lavinia Swisher .... 1921	Mrs. Anna Hoagland .... 1941
Mrs. Alice Schildberg .... 1922	Miss Myrtle Beitsch .... 1942
Mrs. Eva Wideman .... 1923	Mrs. Helen M. Paige .... 1943
Mrs. Gertrude Woods .... 1924	Miss Eleanor Martin .... 1944
Mrs. Mabel L. Tower .... 1925	Mrs. Florence Black .... 1945
Mrs. Mabel Wixom .... 1926	Mrs. Grace I. Dempsey .... 1946
Mrs. Olive Cook .... 1927	Mrs. Edwina L. Jacob .... 1947
Mrs. Jeannette Harrison .... 1928	Mrs. Adelaide C. Wylie .... 1948
	Mrs. Lena Erbes .... 1949
	Mrs. Bertha Carr .... 1950 and 1952
	Mrs. Dorothy M. Merritt .... 1951

Mrs. Adelaide C. Wylie also served as Worthy Matron of the Clare, Michigan chapter in 1936 and as Grand Esther of the Grand chapter of Michigan in 1938.

Twenty-four of the Past Matrons of Azure chapter are still living and members of the Chapter, as follows: Mesdames Kreis, McCray, Tower, Wixom, Cook, Harrison, Salander, Momeny, Eckart, McCully, Irma Beitsch, Mercer, Van Etten, Hoagland, Myrtle Beitsch, Paige, Martin, Black, Dempsey, Jacob, Wylie, Erbes, Carr and Dorothy M. Merritt.

Three other Past Matrons have transferred and are now members of Azure Chapter, as follows: Mrs. Sue Andrews served as Worthy Matron of the Troy Grove chapter in 1933; Mrs. Erma Merritt of the Libertyville chapter in 1936; and Mrs. Ruth Kerchner of two Chapters, the Wyanet Chapter in 1941 and the Sublette Chapter in 1943.

The names of its Past Patrons, and the years in which they served, are as follows:

William R. Foster .... 1904, 1905 and 1906	Glenn M. Momeny .... 1930 and 1931
J. W. Langford .... 1907, 1908, 1909 and 1910	Arthur L. Eckart .... 1932
William Ward .... 1911	Lester H. McCully .... 1933
J. A. Tapper .... 1912	Leslie E. Trout .... 1934
Henry Buel .... 1913 and 1914	Elmer E. Beitsch .... 1935
Daniel Tower .... 1915 and 1916	George P. Jacob .... 1936, 1937 and 1940
Charles E. Merritt .... 1917	Ezra C. Betz .... 1938
Paul Breuer .... 1918 and 1919	James R. Mercer .... 1939
A. R. McNutt .... 1920	George E. Hessenberger .... 1941
Charles M. Salander .... 1921, 1927 and 1929	Robert S. Black .... 1942 and 1945
Rudolph Schildberg .... 1922	Harrison Paige .... 1943
Oscar Wideman .... 1923	Alexander E. Wylie .... 1944
John A. Woods .... 1924	Raymond G. Erbes .... 1946 and 1949
Forrest Tower .... 1925	William T. Jacob .... 1947
C. Walter Jacob .... 1926	Verner E. Bolling .... 1948
Theodore Schildberg .... 1928	Clifford Carr .... 1950 and 1952
	Charles S. Merritt, Sr. .... 1951

Alexander E. Wylie also served as Worthy Patron of the Clare, Michigan chapter in 1933, 1934, 1935 and 1940.

Eighteen of the Past Patrons of Azure chapter are still living and members of the chapter, as follows: Messrs. Tapper, Charles E. Merritt, Salander, Woods, Momeny, McCully, Beitsch, George P. Jacob, Betz, Mercer, Black, Paige, Wylie, Erbes, William T. Jacob, Bolling, Carr and Charles S. Merritt, Sr.

Three other Past Patrons have transferred and are now members of Azure chapter, as follows: Rev. Willard J. Frost served as Worthy Patron of the Williamston, Michigan chapter in 1908; Samuel E. Le Marr of the Onarga chapter in 1912 and 1913; and Gerald Snyder of the Lafayette chapter in 1924.

\* \* \*

Officers of Azure chapter for the year 1953 are as follows: Mrs. Mildred C. Gustavson, Worthy Matron; Karl R. Brunner, Worthy Patron; Mrs. Julia L. Wheeler, Associate Matron; John D. Wheeler, Associate Patron. Mrs. Irene Momeny, secretary; Miss Frances McMillan, treasurer; Mrs. Vivian H. Mason, Conductress; Mrs. Grace Rittmeyer, Associate Conductress; Clifford Carr, Chaplain; Mrs. Bertha Carr, Marshal; Mrs. Mildred E. McCully, organist. Mrs. Doris V. Janes, Adah; Mrs. Bernice Whitmore, Ruth; Mrs. Elizabeth Helbig, Esther; Mrs. Patty Tidd, Martha; Mrs. Evelyn M. Gardner, Electa; Claude A. Rittmeyer, warder; T. J. Helbig, sentinel.

# GALILEE SHRINE, NO. 13, W.S.J.

ON AUGUST 5, 1907, a large group of petitioners met for the purpose of arranging for the instituting of a White Shrine of Jerusalem in Mendota, Illinois. At this meeting Mrs. Florence Lewis of Azure Chapter, Order of the Eastern Star, Mendota, was elected Worthy High Priestess.

Supreme Officers in Charge were S. Love Justice, Supreme Worthy High Priestess; Ora Remsburg of Ohio, Ill. (A member of Capernaum Shrine, Freeport) as Supreme Herald; Pauline Dicks, Supreme Noble Prophetess as Supreme Chaplain.

August 20, 1907, Supreme Shrine having granted Galilee Shrine a charter, the installation of officers was held with S. Love Justice, as installing officer.

The following officers were installed:

Florence Lewis, Worthy High Priestess; John Langford, Watchman of Shepherds; Fannie Langford, Noble Prophetess; Laura Henning, Worthy Shepherdess; Hilda E. Young, Worthy Guide; Maude Perkins, Worthy Herald; Charles C. Kohl, Worthy Treasurer; Joseph W. Edwards, Worthy Scribe; Marguerite Walker, 1st Hand Maid; Minnie Kohl, 2nd Hand Maid; Emma Hoffman, 3rd Hand Maid; Isabella Imus, Worthy Chaplain; Annie Moss, Worthy Guardian; Thomas F. A. Newport, Worthy Guard; H. W. Ferdinand Henning, Worthy Organist.

The following members signed the charter:

Florence Lewis	Annie Moss	John Hoffman
Fannie Langford	Hannah Newport	D. C. Tower
Laura Henning	F. A. Newport	Josephine Tower
Hilda E. Young	Emma Hoffman	May L. Miller
Carrie Moore	John Lewis	Dora Buel
Isabella Imus	H. W. Ferdinand Henning	Henry Buel
Leona Booth	Jos. W. Edwards	Louise Tweed
Lorena Waldorf	John W. Langford	Carrie Wells
Marguerite Walker	O. P. Harris	Maude Perkins
Minnie Kohl	Ruth Harris	Stephen M. Perkins
C. C. Kohl	A. A. Swearingen	Emma Schempp

During the 46 years Galilee Shrine has existed, it has continued to grow in membership.

Present Officers are: Dorothy Merritt, Worthy High Priestess; Charles S. Merritt, Watchman Of Shepherds; Elizabeth Swope, Noble Phophetess; Wendell Swope, Associate Watchman of Shepherds; Lucy McLaughlin, Worthy Scribe; Clarence Ray, Worthy Treasurer; Frances McMillan, Worthy Chaplain; Bessy Edgcomb, Worthy Shepherdess; Marie Gibson, Worthy Guide; Louise Hickok, Worthy Herald; Clifford

Carr, First Wise Man; Harold Grey, Second Wise Man; Floyd Miller, Third Wise Man; Ralph Miller, King; Anna Miller, Queen; Marie Willshay, First Hand Maid; Gladys Hartman, Second Hand Maid; Elsie Hessenberger, Third Hand Maid; Erma Davis, Worthy Organist; August Mende, Worthy Guardian; Alice Pottinger, Worthy Guard.

## ODD FELLOWS LODGE

IN 1870 THE FOLLOWING MEN made application to the Grand Lodge to organize an Odd Fellows lodge in Mendota: Max A. F. Haass, Francis Sikora, Christoph Arnold, David Frank, C. Henning, Jacob Miller, Jacob Fritz, Jacob Kohl, Louis Eckart, John Theurer, E. Gruby and C. Meisenheimer. This was granted and October 11, 1870, a lodge was established in Mendota to be known as Allemania Lodge No. 411.

All ritualistic work was conducted in the German language until the end of World War I.

The first officers of the Lodge were: Max A. F. Haass, noble grand; Jacob Kohl, vice grand; Jacob Fritz, treasurer; David Frank, recording secretary.

The present officers are: Harold Schlesinger, noble grand; Alexander E. Wylie, vice grand; Carl J. Yost, treas.; R. G. Erbes, finance secretary; Louis L. Larson, recording secretary and LeRoy Stein, chaplain.

There was another lodge in Mendota, No. 293. In 1937 this lodge consolidated with Allemania Lodge No. 411.

## REBEKAH LODGE

MENDOTA REBEKAH LODGE #419 was instituted by P. W. Wilcox November 13, 1895. There were 29 charter members.

Rev. Dowling of the Advent Christian church was an ardent Odd Fellow and his enthusiasm did much to set in motion the work of organizing Rebekah Lodge #419.

Viola Caswell was the first Noble Grand and Mrs. Pauline Weidner the treasurer. The lodge flourished for awhile, but due to the death of the leader P. W. Wilcox soon after its organization, the work of the lodge was suspended for a time.

A few of the members held meetings for some time and in that way retained the charter. In 1910 the lodge was reorganized with 25



members. It flourished for awhile and then again became inactive.

Again in 1915, through the efforts of Grace Henry, the lodge was reorganized with 26 initiated members, four by card, and 12 former members. As time passed, the members took more courage, and finally became independent in the work of Rebekah-Odd Fellowship.

Meetings are held on the second and fourth Fridays of each month. They were held on the third floor of the Heiman building until in 1936 when the third floor of that building was removed. It was then they moved to their present location.

A drill team was organized in 1935 and became very active, drilling in many places including a rally meeting at The Old Folks Home in Mattoon, Illinois.

November 13, 1945, the Lodge celebrated its fiftieth anniversary.

Three times has the Mendota lodge been host to District 14: in 1930, 1940 and 1949.

A Past Noble Grand club was formed in 1935 and has been active since.

The Past Noble Grands have been:

Emma Truckenbrod  
Mayme Mueller  
Edna Weitzel  
Esther Riegel  
Ida Amsler  
Margaret Parks  
Mary Shipper  
Sylvene Foster  
Ida Riegel  
Katherine Fischer  
Della Riegel  
Mabel Worsley  
Bernice Martin  
Marjorie Burlingame  
Nora Yost  
Mabel Brown  
Izora Kidd  
Florence Becket  
Louise Leifeit  
Lena Erbes

Helen Shirey  
Millie Lippincott  
Nettie Hoerner  
Katherine King  
Frances Pierson  
Gladys Wooley  
Grace Brown  
Lucille Eddy  
Ada Kilmartin  
Doris Knox  
Esther Henkels  
Marian Sauer  
Alma Sibigroth  
Lou Alice Yates (Becker)  
Letitia Steele  
Maude Smith  
Betty Teauseau  
Phoebe Loach  
Mildred Gustavson  
Margaret Pohl  
Mary Bingelli

## MENDOTA ELKS LODGE NO. 1212

ANY HISTORY of the Elks lodge must first describe another social club which preceded the Elks. This club was known as the Mendota Owl club and had about 100 members. The lodge rooms now occupied by the Odd Fellow lodge were erected by O. C. Weitzel for the Owls. Early in the year 1910 a movement was started by the Owls to organize

an Elks lodge. The leaders were Robert Hallenberg, Henry Zolper, Fred Mueller, and Dan Fitch. The Grand lodge rules at that time stated that a city must have a population of at least 5,000 in order to receive a charter. Committees were then appointed to take a census of the city.

After counting all of the people living in Mendota and a substantial number who had moved from here, we had a total of 5,062. The census was certified by James Shepley, Mayor of Mendota at the time. A dispensation was granted on September 15, 1910, by Aug. Herrmann, Grand Exalted Ruler of the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks to A. W. Bush, L. F. Knauer, William E. Large, D. A. Fitch and three others. This granted permission to organize an Elks lodge to be known as Mendota Lodge No. 1212 B. P. O. E. October 19, 1910, the Mendota lodge was instituted. The scene of this event was Eckart's hall located upstairs in the building now occupied by the A and P store.

The program for the evening started off with a parade of the Mendota band, the candidates and about 250 visiting Elks from Northern Illinois. Also remembered is one large gray goat led by one of the candidates. Streets were decorated with American flags and bunting, and a large white arch was constructed on Jefferson street over the approach from the Union depot, with the inscription "Installation of Mendota Lodge No. 1212 B. P. O. E." District Deputy Grand Exalted Ruler James A. Finlen of the Streator lodge was in charge. LaSalle Lodge No. 584 with Peter Coleman, Exalted Ruler, performed the ritualistic work. Frank L. Fraser, local theater manager, furnished the entertainment. Charter members were as follows:

R. E. Hall	H. G. Scheidecker	Al Greenbaum
F. J. Schwarz	A. C. McIntyre	S. G. Jordan
H. P. Stenger	B. N. Hughes	Chas. G. Walter
Rev. H. A. Hagen	Adolph Karger	Henry Zolper
Eugene Meisenbach	Theo. B. Fischer	Carl Weidner
Jacob G. Reul	B. J. Feik	E. J. Hess
Geo. W. Hoerner	F. R. Bailey	Geo. Wendel
Ben J. Zolper	John W. Dubbs	Bert Vincent
Max Freedman	A. R. Lewis	Arthur J. Williams
Frank E. Munson	Peter J. Conrad	C. E. Shed
Ed Williams	R. W. Witte	H. A. Morrison
John H. Knauer	J. W. Cavanaugh	John Goedtner
Jos. L. Zolper	R. O. Fischer	Henry Kramer
John Bauman	Morgan A. Yule	Siegfried Karger
Fred Mueller	Aug. P. Schmidt	Fred Katzwinkel
Harry R. McMahon	Ralph C. Madden	J. C. Corbus
Rufus W. Waldorf	Wm. B. Sackett	Robt. Hallenberg
Grover M. Sunday	John C. Kehm	M. J. Carr
Geo. Erbes	Fred Prangenberg	H. O. Holland
F. O. McMahon	John P. Schmitz	
A. L. Eckart	Fred L. Marks	

The first officers elected were: Exalted Ruler, Robt. Hallenberg; Esteemed Leading Knight, John W. Dubbs; Esteemed Loyal Knight, B. N. Hughes; Esteemed Lecturing Knight, Frank E. Munson; Secretary, Fred Mueller; Treasurer, Henry Zolper; Tiler, Wm. B. Sackett; Trustees, John Goedtner, Henry Stenger, F. R. Bailey; Esquire, S. J. Jordan; Inner Guard, Bert Vincent; Organist, A. J. Williams; Chaplain, Rev. H. A. Hagen.

The first club rooms were located on Main street upstairs in the building now occupied by the Kanteen. Lodge meetings also were held in these rooms for a few years. About 1915 and until the completion of the present building all lodge meetings were held in the Odd Fellows lodge rooms, located at Main and Washington streets on the third floor.

On March 21, 1917, a special meeting was held. The purpose of this meeting was to consider the purchasing a site for a future Elks home. Meeting was called to order by Jos. L. Zolper, Exalted Ruler. After much discussion about the several sites submitted and due consideration given; the following motion was offered. Motion by Henry Zolper and duly seconded that the lodge purchase the Pepiot (present location of Elks home) property for a consideration of \$8,000; motion carried.

Construction of the new Elks Home was started early in the year 1921 and was completed February 1, 1922. The total cost of the project was \$70,000 which included the furnishings and equipment.

George E. Blanchard was the Exalted Ruler during the period of the construction. There were times when it looked as though the project would surely have to be halted due to a lack of funds; in fact it was held up for about 30 days at one stage of the erection. George however was the man of the hour and through his untiring effort along with other members of the finance committee, additional funds were obtained and the job completed.

The dedication of the new home was held February 22, 1922. The principal speaker of the day was Past Grand Exalted Ruler Bruce A. Campbell of East St. Louis. Evening entertainment consisted of dancing and a grand march by the members and their ladies. Music was furnished by Benson's orchestra of Chicago. Don Bestor, a former Mendota resident, presided at the piano.

The dedication ceremonies were not considered complete without a theatrical show of some kind. Therefore on February 27 the new auditorium was opened to the public with a capacity crowd, the attraction, "The Beggars Opera". The cast was composed entirely of English actors direct from England. There was a wide variation of opinion as to the merits of the show. If you could understand English accent

including Cockney you would no doubt have enjoyed it; a great many were disappointed.

One of the highlights during the twenties was an Elks Circus conducted in 1925. This was put on by the Joe Bren Co. of Chicago who had in their employ two enterprising young men, Charles Correll and Freeman Gosden, known better as Amos and Andy of Radio fame.

Mendota Elks lodge has always taken a leading part in social and community welfare. The Mendota Community Hospital building fund originated within the Elks lodge under the leadership of the late Otto J. Ellingen. They made an initial gift of \$30,000. To date a total of \$63,500 has been given by the lodge to this worthy cause.

During the past eight years the entire interior of the Elks building has been remodeled making it one of the finest in the state of Illinois.

The lodge has grown steadily in membership, the present number of members being 733. Of the 61 Charter members who joined 43 years ago, nine remain as active members today, they are as follows: Robert Hallenberg, John W. Dubbs, R. E. Hall, Fred Mueller, Jos. L. Zolper, Aug. P. Schmidt, Ben J. Zolper, Grover Sunday and John C. Kehm.

The present officers are: Exalted Ruler, Darrel Clark; Esteemed Leading Knight, Martin Masear; Loyal Knight, Dr. W. E. McLaughlin; Lecturing Knight, Harry Hawke; Secretary, Don Whitmore; Treasurer, J. L. Schaller; Tiler, Neil Pillion; Esquire, James Burch; Inner Guard, William Momeny; Chaplain, Harold Potter; Organist, Robert Ellingen; Trustees, G. A. Prescott, A. B. Carlson, J. H. Dubbs, Joe L. Zolper, Harold Sonntag.

## LADY ELKS

IN MARCH, 1913, the mothers, wives, and daughters of members of the Elks lodge met in the Elk's club rooms which at that time were above the room now occupied by the Kanteen. The object of this meeting was to organize a social club for the ladies.

Mr. Hallenberg took charge of the meeting and instructed the ladies on how to organize. The following officers were elected: Mrs. F. R. Bailey, president; Mrs. E. Munson, secretary; Mrs. Fred Mueller, treasurer; Mrs. Ella Henry, vice president.

The entertainment through the years has been card games. The game played has varied through the years according to the game most popular at the time.

The first meeting held in the new Elks building was on February



15, 1922. Eighty-two Elks ladies and guests were present to enjoy a social time and get acquainted with the delightfully pleasant new quarters.

In 1949 because of remodeling at the club the Lady Elks met in the homes.

The following have served as president of this organization:

1913.....Mrs. F. R. Bailey	1934.....Mrs. Rudolph Witte
1914.....Mrs. Ella Henry Knauer	1935.....Mrs. William Saunders
1915.....Mrs. Ella Henry Knauer	1936.....Miss Harriet McIntire
1916.....Mrs. Pauline Weidner	1937.....Mrs. Rita Lasswell
1917.....Mrs. Rudolph Witte	1938.....Mrs. Harry Moore
1918.....Mrs. Rudolph Witte	1939.....Mrs. Godfrey Eichorn
1919.....Mrs. Charlotte Rutt	1940.....Mrs. Orville Andrews
1920.....Mrs. James Ellis	1941.....Mrs. Carl Yost
1921.....Mrs. Arthur McIntire	1942.....Mrs. Carl Yost
1922.....Mrs. Steve Perkins	1943.....Mrs. George Gesslein
1923.....Mrs. Ed. Moore	1944.....Mrs. Ed. Gillette
1924.....Mrs. John Dubbs	1945.....Mrs. Ed. Gillette
1925.....Mrs. George Blanchard	1946.....Mrs. Ed. Gillette
1926.....Mrs. John Eckert	1947.....Miss Edith Miller
1927.....Mrs. Ralph Madden	1948.....Miss Edith Miller
1928.....Mrs. Ed. Cannon	1949.....Mrs. Ira Smith
1929.....Mrs. Karl Pohl	1950.....Mrs. Ira Smith
1930.....Mrs. N. F. Coss	1951.....Mrs. Harry Doty
1931.....Mrs. O. D. Harrison	1952.....Mrs. Maude Eckart
1932.....Mrs. Harry Doty	The president for 1953 is Mrs. Frank Driver
1933.....Mrs. Arthur McIntire	

# KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS

MENDOTA COUNCIL NO. 2090 was instituted February 1, 1920, by District Deputy John E. Cooney of Chicago. The Rev. Father Vincent O'Brien was appointed to act as the first Grand Knight and served until September of the same year, when in regular meeting the following officers were elected:

Joseph Zolper.....Grand Knight	Leo Coss.....Inside Guard
Edw. Marmion....Dep. Grand Knight	Mike Schmitz.....Outside Guard
John W. Dubbs.....Chancellor	Wm. Phalen, Sr.....Trustee
O. J. Ellingen.....Recorder	Fr. Vincent O'Brien.....
A. A. Landgraf....Financial Secretary	.....Delegate to State Convention
Paul Stenger.....Treasurer	James Egan.....Alternate to G. K.
John P. Schmitz.....Warden	Wm. Leiser, Sr.....Alternate Delegate

The Supreme Council or first Council of the Knights of Columbus was organized as a fraternal society for Roman Catholic men, established to render aid to members and their families in the form of insurance, sick benefits, relief work, and educational programs. It was instituted in 1882 by the Rev. Joseph M. McGivney, pastor of St. Mary's Church in New Haven, Conn.

The society is secret, but has no oath, and is degree conferring, having four degrees of ceremonials, representing Charity, Unity, Fraternity, and Patriotism. Insurance members are received between the ages of 18 and 50, (Recently a junior insurance feature has been added) and associate and non-insured members from 21 upwards. In addition to its insurance features, the order is devoted to the protection of Catholic interests and interests of Catholic men and women, and aims to propagate Catholic doctrine from the platform and by literature.

It has endowed a chair of American History at the Catholic University of America, and maintains 50 perpetual free scholarships there. The observance of Columbus Day is due largely to the concerted efforts of the members.

Branches of the order like Mendota Council exist in every state and territory of the continental United States, as well as Canadian provinces, Newfoundland, Alaska, Cuba, The Canal Zone, Panama, the Philippine Islands, Mexico and Puerto Rico. The Order had a total membership of 850,000 in 1952. In the same year it had in force insurance certificates of \$371,269,821. and a reserve fund of \$73,000,000.

In 1928 the organization founded the Columbian Squires for boys 14 to 18 years of age. There are approximately now 2945 subordinate councils and represented by 61 state councils.

Charitable activities include endowment facilities in Catholic hospitals, a "million dollar" Catholic scholarship fund for children of members killed or totally disabled in World War II, post war activities committees, financial grants, and contributions to educational and other sources.

The present officers of Mendota Lodge are: Leo Glaser, Past Grand Knight; Leo Hochstatter, Grand Knight; Ray Happ, Dep. Grand Knight; Urban Henry, Financial Sec'y; Leonard Henkel, Treasurer; Robert McIntyre, Warden; Leo Burkardt, Chancellor; Emmett Walzer, Recorder; Leonard Schmidt, Advocate; Leo Weber and Otto Harth, Guards; L. M. Dinges, Lecturer; Paul Jones, Leo Schmidt, and Leo Glaser, Trustees; Fr. Paul Hettinger, Chaplain.

Meetings are held each second and fourth Tuesday of the month, at the K. of C. Home on North Main street, which was purchased by Council members several years ago.

## MENDOTA WOMAN'S CLUB

THIS CLUB WAS ORGANIZED March 15, 1897, at the home of Mrs. N. C. Cummings. Twelve women had answered the call for "organizing a society for mutual improvement and creating an organized center of

thought and action among women." There were 16 charter members. Mrs. E. S. Browne, wife of Mendota's mayor, was elected president and a constitution was drawn up. The members voted to meet weekly at the homes of members and to take up art, history, literature and science for "cultural improvement."

We may certainly consider the members of this club of 56 years ago very brave women on several counts. They met in the evening; street lighting was very poor and even non-existent in some parts of the town; sidewalks were primitive affairs, partly of wood; crossings likely to be knee deep in mud, snow, or dust, as very few roads were improved; and husbands of that day were usually unsympathetic to the Woman's club movement. However, this little band of women persevered, brought their club into membership with the state federation within two months, and created an active organization which has been a power and influence in Mendota.

Another mayor's wife, Mrs. Newton Imus, was an early president of the club. All through the years, we find women of local prominence taking active part.

The field of work of the club has naturally changed many times. These changes have been motivated by the changing eras of the 20th century. The club has attained in 1953 a membership of 180.

If some of the things the early Woman's club did seem naive and amusing to us now, let us think that perhaps in the year 2000 some of our burning questions may be equally so.

In the early years of the century, the Woman's club engaged in these pursuits: beautifying the school grounds, distributing seeds to school children, circulating an anti-cigarette petition, getting signatures to a woman's rights bill, presenting an anti-spitting ordinance to the City Council, studying history and art and literature. The subject of one program was "Decisive Battles of the World"! This is only a partial list of activities. The club has always taken an active part in civic projects and community service.

Within the last four years, the club has contributed \$700 to the Community Hospital building fund. Contributions of money and books have been given to the library. For many years, a scholarship fund was given to the high school and distributed as awards to outstanding students. At the present time an art and a music scholarship are awarded each year, enabling two worthy scholars to attend the summer Egyptian Music Camp and Art Camp.

The club is now divided into five departments of work, namely: American Home, Art and Music, Civic, Education, and Public Welfare.

Members choose their department, according to their interests,

and thus are enabled to be active in fields of service for which their talents and concerns especially fit them. The club meets on alternate Mondays at the Baptist Parish House, with the departments in turn presenting a program at each meeting. In addition, each department holds meetings of its own, and decides upon its own projects.

## THE MENDOTA JUNIOR WOMAN'S CLUB

THIS CLUB WAS ORGANIZED under the sponsorship of the Mendota Senior Women's Club on March 6, 1934, with 12 charter members. Mrs. Selina Hubler, who was then president of the senior club, became the first adviser of the Junior Club and continued in that capacity until 1937, when she became honorary adviser. The present active advisers are Mrs. Josephine T. Coss, who has been re-elected annually since 1935, and Mrs. Harvey Barth, re-elected annually since 1937.

Quoting directly from its constitution, the object of this club "shall be the advancement of moral, educational, and social welfare of the community". The members have attained this goal through their programs which are covered by three departments and three permanent committees: Art and Music, Literature and Drama, Community Service, Legislative, Public Health, and Motion Pictures.

The organization meets on the first and third Tuesdays of every month in a club year extending from October to May. Besides its meetings, the Junior Woman's club has also sponsored many successful projects, annually contributing its profits to charity. The major undertaking of the club since 1945 is an annual spring style show produced through the cooperation of Mendota merchants.

Since its beginning 19 years ago, the club has continued to grow in membership to a present total of 61. During those years the following have served as presidents of the organization:

Mrs. A. B. Carlson .....	1934-1935	Mrs. Chester Hyde .....	1944-1945
Mrs. Ronald Stoner .....	1935-1936	Mrs. Albert Butler, Jr. ....	1945-1946
Miss Marie Elsesser .....	1936-1937	Mrs. Harold Wise .....	1946-1947
Mrs. Wesley Yenerich .....	1937-1938	Miss Hirrel Swanson (Schmidt)	
Mrs. Franklin Truckenbrod ..	1938-1939	.....	1947-1948, 1948-1949
Mrs. James Armstrong .....	1939-1940	Mrs. Louis Scheidenhelm ...	1949-1950
Mrs. Leon Frey .....	1940-1941	Mrs. Robert Godfrey .....	1950-1951
Mrs. A. W. Whitmore .....	1941-1942	Mrs. Donald Faber .....	1951-1952
Mrs. James Wagner }		Mrs. Delbert Holland .....	1952-1953
Mrs. John Goebel .. }	.....1942-1943	Mrs. Willis Snyder .....	1953-1954
Mrs. Raymond Cook .....	1943-1944		



# BUSINESS AND PROFESSIONAL WOMEN

THIS CLUB WAS ORGANIZED March 10, 1937. The charter was presented by Miss Jane A. Magan, Chicago, at the April meeting. Miss Myrtle Beitsch was elected president; Mrs. W. L. Gish, first vice-president; Miss Lois Hoerner (Mrs. Paul Gehant), second vice-president; Miss Lorraine Lasswell, secretary; Miss Adena Johnson, treasurer.

The purpose of the club is to elevate the standards of women in business or profession; to promote their interest; to bring about a spirit of cooperation; to extend opportunities and create friendship.

The club is non-partisan, non-sectarian, self governing and self supporting. The National Federation has been active over 20 years and has a membership of over 60,000 women. The state project is the Celia M. Howard Fellowship, a law school scholarship. Besides supporting all state projects the club takes an active part in any local project.

The program is divided into departments which are: public affairs, legislation, education and vocation, hospitality, finance, international affairs, national security, health and safety. One of these departments has charge of each program.

The meetings, preceded by a dinner, are held the fourth Thursday of the month. At present they are held in the home of Mrs. Ina Moore.

Since the club was organized the following have served as presidents:

Miss Myrtle Beitsch .....	1937	(Mrs. Paul Gehant) .....	1944
Mrs. W. L. Gish .....	1938	Miss Mary Margaret Zolpher	
Miss Wilma Hofert .....	1939	(Mrs. James Highsmith) .....	1945
Miss Mabel Brown .....	1940	Mrs. Harry Doty .....	1947
Miss Harriet McIntire		Mrs. Alice Schildberg .....	1948
(deceased) .....	1941	Mrs. Emmett Nowlin .....	1949
Miss Helen Phalen		Mrs. Victor Schuhler .....	1950
(Mrs. Headley Casady) .....	1942	Miss Bertha Kutter .....	1951
Miss Alice Pottinger .....	1943	Mrs. Josephine Landgraf .....	1952
Miss Lois Hoerner		Mrs. Myron Millett .....	1953

## P.E.O. SISTERHOOD

P. E. O. WAS STARTED in 1869 by seven girls who were attending college at Iowa Wesleyan, Mt. Pleasant, Iowa. Their aim was to form an organization to perpetuate their love and friendship for one another.

With this small beginning P. E. O. has a present membership of more than 112,000 with chapters in almost every state in the Union,

in Canada, and in Alaska and Hawaii. P. E. O. is non-partisan and inter-denominational. Members must be 18 years of age and acknowledge belief in God.

The two main P. E. O. projects are a student loan fund of nearly \$900,000 which was established in 1907 to assist young women to complete their higher education with a view to becoming self-supporting; and Cottey College, located in Nevada, Missouri. Cottey College was founded in 1884 and was presented to P. E. O. in 1927 by the founder, Virginia Cottey Stockard. It is a Christian college, and is fully accredited by the North Central association.

P. E. O. executive offices are located in the Memorial Library, a P. E. O. gift to Iowa Wesleyan which was erected in Mt. Pleasant at a cost of \$100,000. The library also houses countless priceless objects of art.

The post-war activities of P. E. O. include adoption of hundreds of overseas families, gifts of pianos, radios, record players, film projectors, etc., to veterans hospitals and the establishment of a department of international scholarships. P. E. O. has an accredited observer at U.N.

The official magazine "The Record" is a monthly magazine printed by the Wayside Press in Mendota.

Many states have beautiful P. E. O. Homes for the comfort of those elderly members who desire such a residence. The recently acquired Illinois Home is located at Knoxville and was dedicated in May, 1953.

Although each chapter is under the jurisdiction of its state and Supreme Chapter each has its own constitution and by-laws regulating its meetings, membership, dues, programs and local activities.

Chapter BV, Mendota, was organized in 1924. This chapter has always been identified with the civic affairs of the city. Besides contributing to the required P. E. O. projects and sponsoring five local loan girls, they regularly support the local library, the Kanteen, Boy Scouts, Camp Fire Girls, the Red Cross and many other worthy causes. They gave over \$1,000 to the furnishing of the nursery in the Mendota Community Hospital and have continued to contribute to this project in various ways.

Since the dedication of the hospital they have furnished decorated Christmas trees for both the reception room and the second floor. Many of the members have given countless hours of voluntary service in the Ladies' Auxiliary of the hospital, the Gray Ladies' service and nurse's aids organizations.

The following have served as president of the Mendota Chapter:

Mrs. Mary Lotts  
Mrs. Florence Cook  
Mrs. Alma Reck  
Mrs. Ada Madden  
Mrs. Ann Van Etten  
Mrs. Nano Dubbs  
Mrs. Adrienne Faber  
Mrs. Helen Scott  
Mrs. Pearl Schaller  
Miss Lois Moore

Mrs. Florence Ellis  
Miss Elizabeth Colson (Young)  
Mrs. Caroline Schaller  
Mrs. June Claus  
Mrs. Wilma Butler  
Mrs. Dorothy Greenwood  
Mrs. Virginia Potter  
Miss Florence Goodwin  
Mrs. Jane Jacob  
Mrs. Mary Ellen Lipke

Mrs. Alma Reck is the 1953 president.

## KIWANIS CLUB

THE KIWANIS CLUB was organized, November 19, 1923, at a meeting held in the dining room of the Depot hotel. Tom Marshall, a deputy of the Kewanee Kiwanis Club, assisted in the organization. He had come to Mendota some weeks previous at the request of representative business and professional men.

Forty-six men in Mendota had been selected to form the organization. It was a wonderful evening.

D. J. O'Connell, Manager of the Depot hotel served a fine banquet, and guests from the Kewanee Kiwanis club, besides the district deputy, Tom Marshall, were T. A. Curnow, R. E. Taylor, James W. Bradley, secretary of the club; Dr. G. H. Hoffman, C. V. Burnam and H. Detrow. The motto of the Kiwanis club is "We Build", and it was believed the new organization would work for the betterment of Mendota and its varied interests. This has proven to be a fact for the Mendota Kiwanis club now nearly 30 years in existence, is still going strong and through the years can tell of many worthwhile accomplishments.

The first officers and directors elected were President, Fim Murra; Vice-president, D. C. Tower; Secretary, O. J. Ellingen; Treasurer, D. C. Haskell; District Trustee, John W. Dubbs. Directors were Robert Allen, T. E. Cavanagh, Dr. A. M. Ells, R. W. Witte, Rev. H. Vincent O'Brien, W. F. Colson, and C. P. Gardner.

Attorney John W. Dubbs was on the program for a speech and also Senator C. P. Gardner.

There were 46 business and professional men taken into this new organization. Here is a list of the charter members: F. C. Lenihan, K. W. Pohl, J. Hepburn Walker, Fim Murra, D. C. Tower, S. C. Cash, Dr. A. C. McIntyre, George W. Nisley, John D. Wilson, C. C. Parks, J. H. Knauer, Dr. W. M. Wagner, Ralph E. Beebe, Wilmot Van Etten, T. E. Cavanagh, D. C. Haskell, W. M. Colson, Adolph

G. Tesche, John S. Goebel, Dr. B. N. Hughes, Rev. Wm. F. Selk, Dr. J. C. Corbus, Paul Stenger, Clarence W. Potter, Charles D. Larabee, Rev. A. M. Ells, L. G. Knauer, John E. Alexander, Dr. Glen D. Grogan, Dr. Edgar C. Cook, T. E. Moore, D. M. Lotts, George E. Whitmore, O. J. Ellingen, Atty. John W. Dubbs, R. G. Cavell, R. W. Witte, R. N. Crawford, W. G. Van Etten, D. L. Barnett, Robert Allen, C. P. Gardner, Rev. H. Vincent O'Brien, A. W. Bush, John P. Gallagher, D. J. O'Connell.

Only two charter members remain as active members of the club today; George Nisley and Adolph Tesche. John W. Dubbs has been voted an inactive member.

The charter meeting of the local Kiwanis club was held in the Elks auditorium January 8, 1924. There were about 100 representatives from various clubs present as well as members from the International office. Kewanee, Rock Island, Galva, Dixon, Chillicothe, Aurora were represented. Gov. Dan Wentworth of the national office presented the charter to Fim Murra, president.

The Mendota Kiwanis club is a member of an international organization known as Kiwanis International, a service organization consisting of more than 3,500 clubs in the cities and towns of the United States and Canada with a classified membership from business, agriculture, institutions, and professional life, holding weekly meetings with programs of fellowship and personal development to create leadership for community betterment and other worthy causes. The specific objectives of Kiwanis International are —

1. To give primary to the spiritual.
2. To provide opportunity for friendships.
3. To encourage the practice of the golden rule.
4. To promote high standards for business and professions.
5. To cooperate in maintaining righteousness, justice, and patriotism.
6. To develop good citizenship.

Past presidents of the Mendota Club in order of service are:

Fim Murra  
R. E. Beebe  
Dr. A. C. McIntyre  
O. J. Ellingen  
Spencer Moss  
M. E. Steele  
E. C. Cook  
John Turnbull  
Rufus Dewitz  
W. A. Stauffer

George Nisley  
W. C. Gish  
George Hessenberger  
John Goodpasture  
Jack Lasswell  
R. W. Ranney  
Elmer Feik  
Henry Rose  
Russell Carr  
Harold Goebel

Jake Spanier  
Austin Calderwood  
Harold Dean  
B. Harry Reck  
Lloyd Doenier  
Asa Sprunger  
Kenneth Sollitt  
Willard Johnson  
Glenn Lines  
H. D. Hume



Two of the above have served as Lieutenant Governor of this division; M. E. Steele and Harold Dean.

For many years after its organization the Kiwanis club served both as a service club and a chamber of commerce. It started its career by bringing the Inderrieden Canning company to Mendota. The high school band was completely uniformed; the teachers were entertained; additional parking spaces were planned for the city; Boy Scout troupe was organized; camp trips for deserving boys provided; lyceum courses sponsored; Easter Egg hunt instigated; special auto given to Gilford Moss; Hallowe'en parties provided for the youth; Kids' Day sponsored; and many other projects supported financially or otherwise, such as farmer's night, Mendota Lake project, Mendota Youth Center, and others. Eighteen hundred dollars were raised last year for worthy causes.

The club at the present time is in excellent condition, having 60 members. The officers are as follows: president, Horace Hume; vice-president, Hubert Crow; secretary, Robert Stafford; and treasurer, Claude G. Radley.

## LIONS CLUB

THE MENDOTA LIONS CLUB was chartered November 29, 1938, by a group of 26 "then" young men of Mendota. For several years the membership was limited to 30 in number but has now increased to an active roster of 66 members.

The Mendota Lions club is the only civic organization which owns its own club house, which has also been made available for meetings of other organizations. It is equipped with a complete kitchen and facilities to serve 125 at one sitting. The club is one of the most active civic clubs in Mendota; its accomplishments have been legion.

Immediately after its organization, it took over the old Mendota fair grounds for four years and successfully put on a county fair. The city and surrounding community became vitally interested and the result is the present Tri-County Fair association.

In 1943, believing the youth of the community should be served, the club arranged for rental of a downtown building and with the physical and financial co-operation of its members and other civic minded citizens, created the Mendota Youth Center, familiarly known as the Kanteen, for the use of teen-age children. The club has continued to support and sponsor it since its founding.

Annually, for the past five years, the club has brought to Mendota the Gamma Phi gymnastic circus from Illinois State Normal university, an outstanding attraction. The club has supported and sponsored a Junior League baseball team. The community and tourists have greatly enjoyed the shelter house and bath house erected at Lake Mendota by the club.

The club has earned by its efforts approximately \$20,000 and has contributed its earnings to the Kanteen, Mendota Community Hospital, Red Cross, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, etc.

## MOOSE LODGE NO. 714

MOOSE LODGE #714 was instituted in Mendota February 5, 1926, and grew to a membership of nearly 300. Early in 1930, as with many other organizations, membership dropped off and activity was dormant.

In the latter part of 1949 Joseph P. Stremlau, Joe Funfsinn, Joe Weber and Adolph Goubeaux, so called old members, called a meeting and revived the spirit of Moosedom in Mendota.

The Moose Order was founded nationally in 1888. The order was designed to unite its members in fraternal bonds and together work for the "Elevation of Society". The order operates a vocational school and home for boys and girls whose fathers were members of the organization. This home is located at Mooseheart, Illinois. A home for aged dependent members is maintained at Moosehaven, Orange Park, Florida.

The local lodge now has a membership of 175.

The officers for 1953-54 are: George Cassidy, Jr. Past Governor; Carlos Parsons, Governor; Leo Hochstatter, Jr. Governor; Tom Kelly, Prelate; Nick Phalen, Secretary; Kenneth Yohn, Treasurer; Adolph Goubeaux, Sergeant at Arms.

The Loyal Order of Moose has a splendid record of family protection, and has generously served its members and their families.

Meetings are held the second and fourth Monday of each month in the Knights of Columbus hall.

## MOOSE AUXILIARY

THROUGH THE EFFORTS of the Loyal Order of Moose, plans for a woman's chapter of Moose were begun. On April 15, 1953, the organization meeting was held. Initiation was conducted by the La Salle

chapter who also installed the officers. These officers were: Senior Regent, Margaret Gillette; Junior Regent, Adele Parsons; Chaplain, Dorothy Mealey; Recorder, Hazel Edwards; Treasurer, Crystelle Frost; Graduate Regent, Beverly Yohn.

The charter members for this new organization, Women of the Moose, Mendota Chapter No. 766, are: Margaret Gillette, Adele Parsons, Dorothy Mealey, Hazel Edwards, Crystelle Frost, Beverly Yohn, Veronica Dickey, Catherine Grey, Kathryn Biers, Jean Bauer, Mary Schlesinger, Mary Catherine Phalen, Elizabeth Cassidy, Francis F. Hochstatter, Lois Mealey, Mary Stephenitch, Edna Yohn, Viola Klein, Eleanor Heitmann, Mary Kuntzi, Laura Balch, Margaret Funfsinn, Dorothy Michel, Norma Gallagher, Clara Bierworth, Evangeline Driver, Catherine Hahn, Virginia Hampton, Florence Fitzgerald.

The first meeting was an open meeting and the ladies were entertained by the Moose lodge.

## GRAND ARMY OF THE REPUBLIC AND ALLIED ORDERS

THE GRAND ARMY OF THE REPUBLIC was the leading veterans' organization of soldiers, sailors and marines who served with the Union Army during the Civil War. Founded in Decatur, Illinois, on April 6, 1866, it rapidly grew into a national organization and exercised a tremendous influence over American life from 1880 until about 1910.

At the time of its founding, the Civil war had been over for only one year, and many other associations of Civil war veterans were in existence. Although there was keen rivalry among these groups for many years, the Grand Army of the Republic proved the strongest association and was eventually recognized as the leading veterans' organization.

The Grand Army of the Republic was established in Mendota on April 25, 1882, and had a continuous existence in this community for nearly 55 years until the last surviving member, John Bellinghausen, died on January 22, 1935.

Today, the national organization is practically extinct, because only one member, Albert H. Woolson, 106 years old, of Duluth, Minnesota, is still living.

Five other organizations of national scope, however, are affiliated with the Grand Army of the Republic and are known as Allied Orders.

Although several of these Allied Orders have been active in Mendota over the years, none is in existence at the present time.

The following is a history of the various Civil War veterans' organizations as they pertained to Mendota:

## OUR COUNTRY'S DEFENDERS

The first Civil War veterans' organization, as far as now known, to establish itself in Mendota was Our Country's Defenders. This was not one of the Allied Orders, but was an organization competing with the Grand Army of the Republic, and its leaders at that time hoped it would become the chief Civil War veterans' organization — a hope that was not to be fulfilled.

George H. Thomas Encampment No. 23, Our Country's Defenders, was organized in Mendota on February 2, 1880, and had an active existence here for more than two years.

There were 30 charter members in the Mendota Encampment, and officers were elected and installed semi-annually. During both terms of the year 1880, P. W. Wilcox was Commander and Charles J. Yockey was Adjutant. Charles J. Yockey was elected Commander for both terms in 1881, and R. F. Shipley and J. W. Penfield were Adjutants during the same year. No officers were elected for 1882, and it is probable that there was considerable sentiment for disbanding when the time for election arrived.

The following is an extract from the minutes of a meeting held on April 14, 1882, which was apparently the last meeting of the Encampment:

"Commander Yockey stated that the object of the meeting was to take action on the motion heretofore introduced by Commander Wilcox to transfer the money and property of Our Country's Defenders to the post of the Grand Army of the Republic when organized, also appropriating \$16 to pay for a Grand Army charter.

"Moved that a call be presented to those present to sign for a Grand Army organization. Motion carried."

Shortly after this meeting of April 14, 1882, Our Country's Defenders in Mendota ceased to exist.

## GRAND ARMY OF THE REPUBLIC

The Charter for C. A. Andress Post No. 135, Grand Army of the Republic was issued April 25, 1882. Thereafter this organization had



a continuous existence in Mendota for nearly 55 years until the last member died in 1935.

The first meeting of the new Post was held April 28, 1882. The Adjutant states that the following men were present for the first meeting: Charles J. Yockey, William Parker, R. F. Shipley, George W. Haar, M. D. Palmer, William Conkey, Henry Richards, H. S. Williams, William Patrick, John Smith, J. W. Stevenson, W. H. Lives and Henry Eby.

At this meeting, the following were elected officers of the new post for the first year: Charles J. Yockey, Commander; William Conkey, Senior Vice Commander; William Parker, Junior Vice Commander; R. F. Shipley, Quartermaster; W. H. Lives, Chaplain; George W. Haar, Officer of the Day; and M. D. Palmer, Outer Guard. The new Commander also appointed John Smith, Adjutant; Henry H. Eby, Sergeant Major; and Henry Richards, Quartermaster Sergeant.

The second meeting was held May 12, 1882, and the following is extracted from the minutes:

"The Committee on By-laws and name made the following report: Your Committee would respectfully report that they would recommend that the Post be called C. A. Andress Post No. 135 in respect to the memory of Lt. Col. C. A. Andress buried in the cemetery at this place. Motion carried."

At this second meeting the applications of six Civil war veterans were received and all duly elected to membership, including D. C. Andress and W. J. Pollings, who were listed in the minutes of the previous organization.

The C. A. Andress Post No. 135 continued in existence until January 22, 1935, on which date, John Bellinghausen, the last surviving member passed away. During its first 35 years it was very active, but after death began to take the members more rapidly, it became less and less important as an influence in this community.

Commanders who served the post were: Charles J. Yockey, R. F. Shipley, Dr. J. W. Edwards, Edward J. Tansey, M. D. Palmer, Hubbard Clink, George S. Scullen, H. S. Williams, James Skiles, Henry A. Buel, Henry H. Eby, George W. Westgate and John Bellinghausen.

In the early days of its organization, a drum corps was sponsored by the local post which took part in parades and other celebrations. Each year elaborate preparations were made for the observance of Memorial Day, at that time called Decoration Day. The other patriotic days, such as the Fourth of July, were equally well observed.

It was largely through the local post that a Women's Relief Corps, one of the Allied Orders, was also organized in Mendota. Later, it was

also instrumental in helping organize the Sons of Veterans, another Allied Order.

The last Adjutant was G. W. Orris, who served for several years until his death in November, 1930. The office was vacant until the next year when B. J. Dean, the son of a Civil war veteran, was appointed secretary. At that time there were only three members left and one of these soon passed away.

Mr. Dean served as secretary under the last three Commanders, and after the death of the last member, C. A. Andress Post No. 135, Grand Army of the Republic, ceased to exist in Mendota.

## WOMEN'S RELIEF CORPS

Although only a memory in Mendota today, C. A. Andress Corps No. 284, Women's Relief Corps, was once one of the leading organizations of our city. Coming into existence about a dozen years after the local post of the Grand Army of the Republic was established, it soon proved itself to be a strong and forceful influence in the community.

It was this corps that was responsible for the imposing monument which stands today in Restland cemetery. Through the efforts of the local corps, the monument was built in memory of the military and naval forces here in Mendota who served in the Civil war.

The inscription on the monument reads as follows: "Erected in Memory of the Heroes of the Rebellion, 1861-1865, by the Women's Relief Corps, the Grand Army of the Republic, and the citizens of Mendota and Vicinity."

Although the records of this organization have not been available for research, it is known that many of the members still reside in Mendota. Among them are Mrs. Mary Barth, Mrs. Lena Billhorn, Mrs. Susanne Kohl, Miss Florence Nolan and Miss Lena Vogler.

Miss Nolan, who was president of the local corps in 1919, was at that time the youngest woman ever to serve in this office. Mrs. Barth was a former secretary.

Just when the Women's Relief Corps was established here is not known, but it is believed to be about 1894.

As the local Grand Army of the Republic Post became smaller by death of members, the Women's Relief Corps likewise became smaller. After all Civil war veterans of Mendota had passed away, the auxiliary organization had too few members to fill the offices properly and it was voted to surrender the charter and disband, sometime in the late 1920's.

# SONS OF UNION VETERANS OF THE CIVIL WAR

The second of the Allied Orders to be established in Mendota was the organization now known as Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War, at that time called Sons of Veterans.

Mendota Camp No. 54, Sons of Veterans, was organized in 1895. The minutes of the local Grand Army of the Republic Post show that a preliminary meeting was held on May 25 and that an organization meeting and election of the three principal officers was held on June 8. Charter for the new organization was issued on July 30. Although the organization lasted only a few years, it was quite active during most of this time.

The Roll Call of Members as of July 10, 1895, lists the following: George A. Dodge, Maurice J. Smith, N. J. Riegel, Daniel M. Scullen, George A. Scullen, William Edwards, Loyis H. Richards, George E. Welkish, H. W. Koerper, George B. Richert, John M. Sandosky, Gabriel Koerper, Albert P. Wilkins, George Riegel, William F. Rex, Louis A. Rex, Ed R. Tansey, Harry H. Lewis, Charles Powell, George Failing, S. W. Bartlett, Charles Smith and J. R. Girard.

Seven other young men are listed as having joined after the camp was organized. These were: Arthur Edwards, W. B. Palmer, W. J. Girard, S. O. Girard, Fay E. Winslow, J. H. Wells and John A. Morey.

The presiding officer was called captain. Ed R. Tansey held this office in 1895, Maurice J. Smith in 1896, George A. Dodge in 1897, and J. R. Girard in 1898 until the camp was disbanded during that year.

The last meeting held, as shown by the roll call of members, was on April 25, 1898. The minutes are not available, but it is probable that it was then voted to disband and to dispose of the camp property.

# DAUGHTERS OF UNION VETERANS OF THE CIVIL WAR

Although this Allied Order was never established in Mendota, several local residents have been members elsewhere. At the present time, Miss Josephine Nolan, Miss Florence Nolan, and Mrs. Adelaide C. Wylie are members of May F. Woods Tent No. 18, Daughters of Union Veterans of the Civil war located at Joliet. Mrs. Wylie was fourth district patriotic instructor in 1948.

# THE AMERICAN LEGION

MENDOTA POST NO. 540 was issued its temporary charter March 4, 1920, with the permanent charter being issued August 1, 1920, and countersigned August 10, 1920.

The charter members in the order they appear on the temporary charter were:

John A. Klinefelter  
Willard H. Castle  
Henry C. Sturman  
Edmund F. Mueller  
Emory J. Munson  
Timothy E. Vogler  
Burton P. Edwards  
Frank R. Full  
Eugene Mueller  
William O. Auchstetter  
George W. Anderson  
Gilbert S. Schaller  
Rudolph B. Lucas

Mathew A. Burg  
Herbert D. Waldorf  
John W. Schmitt  
F. H. Glahns  
Paul H. Faber  
Harry F. Schaller  
William G. Faber  
John D. Wilson  
Frank C. Lenihan  
Harry W. Meisel  
Henry G. Kohl  
Harold J. John

Several others joined the Post shortly after the temporary charter was issued, including Dr. Edgar C. Cook, who became the Post's first Commander.

Twelve of the charter members are still members of the Post: Klinefelter, Castle, Auchstetter, Lucas, Schmitt, Paul H. Faber, Harry F. Schaller, William G. Faber, Lenihan, Meisel, Kohl, and John.

Since the Post was organized the following have served as Commanders:

Dr. Edgar C. Cook .....1920  
Gilbert S. Schaller .....1921  
Robert S. Black .....1922  
Robert S. Black .....1923  
Harry F. Schaller .....1924  
Norman K. Quandahl .....1925  
John E. Black .....1926  
Clarence L. Ray .....1927  
Glen I. Nixdorf .....1928  
Arch S. Spenader .....1929  
Harry W. Meisel .....1930  
Wayne E. Perkins .....1931  
Raymond J. Eckart .....1932  
Laurence J. Boyle .....1933  
Henry G. Kohl .....1934  
Clarence Rogers .....1935  
William O. Auchstetter .....1936

William G. Faber .....1937  
Walter Elsesser .....1938  
Ralph C. Jacob .....1939  
John W. Schmitt .....1940  
Rufus E. Dewitz .....1941  
George E. Mercer .....1942  
Ralph E. Bailey .....1943  
Roy E. Williams .....1944  
John C. Kehm .....1945  
Alexander E. Wylie .....1946  
John G. Conaboy .....1947  
Ilo T. Tower .....1948  
Reginald K. Robeson .....1949  
Russell C. Brecht .....1950  
William M. Gish .....1951  
Donald L. Echelbarger .....1952

Three other Past Commanders have joined the ranks and are now members of local Post No. 540. They are C. H. Greenwood of the Kirkland Post, Golden R. Kerchner of the Wyman Post, and Harry S. Messmore of the Galva Post.



Officers for the year 1953 are as follows: Gerald A. Truckenbrod, Commander; Robert M. Wilson, Vice Commander; Christ T. Troupis, Junior Vice Commander; Ralph E. Booth, Adjutant; Harold E. Terry, Finance Officer; Peter J. Donohue, Chaplain; Leslie E. Gordon, Historian; Henry G. Kohl, Service Officer; Robert W. Francis, Sergeant-at-Arms.

## AMERICAN LEGION AUXILIARY

A GROUP OF MOTHERS, SISTERS AND WIVES of members of the American Legion met June 24, 1920, in the parlor of the Faber Hotel, for the purpose of taking the preliminary steps to organize an Auxiliary. At that time Dr. Edgar C. Cook was Post Commander and the Legion had issued the invitations.

Signers for the Application of a Unit Charter were:

Mrs. Anna S. Wilcox  
Leone Roth  
Myrtle Beitsch  
Mrs. George Kohl  
Amanda Koerper  
Mrs. Mary Shipper  
Mrs. H. Meisel  
Clara Schaller  
Mrs. C. G. Knoblauch,  
Acting President

Mrs. R. H. Hanson  
Mrs. P. A. Stenger  
Mrs. Elmer Gephard  
Mrs. Norman Quandahl  
Mrs. George Cummings  
Mrs. Fred Mueller  
Bertha Vogler  
Mrs. Rudolph Jacob, Sr.  
Edgar C. Cook,  
Post Commander

A meeting was called in July in the basement of the Public Library, at which time the ladies pledged their help to the boys for the 4th of July picnic. The reason for organization was to assist the Legion in all undertakings.

August 3, 1920, the headquarters of the unit were transferred to the City Hall where meetings were held for a number of years. Later the headquarters were moved to the upstairs rooms of the Tesche building on Main street and at present are held in the American Legion rooms.

The second meeting of the unit was held August 3, 1920 at which time the following officers were elected: President, Myrtle Beitsch; Vice President, Mrs. Fred Mueller; Treasurer, Mrs. Paul Stenger; Secretary, Bertha Vogler.

February 1, 1921, the charter was issued to Unit Post No. 540. The original chapter consisted of eighty-two members, as follows:

Bertha Vogler  
Mrs. Veit C. Schaller  
Mrs. Mildred Quandahl  
Mrs. Tillie Meisel

Mrs. Margaret C. Potter  
Mrs. Paul Stenger  
Mrs. Anna S. Wilcox  
Mrs. Mabel Nixdorff

Leone C. Roth  
 Myrtle M. Beitsch  
 Mrs. Mary Shipper  
 Mrs. Gertrude Full  
 Mrs. Vera E. Schilt  
 Katherine E. Hoyer  
 Amanda E. Koerper  
 Mrs. Mildred E. Gephard  
 Mrs. Irene Flessner  
 Mrs. Myrtle Knoblauch  
 Mrs. Agnes Coss  
 Mrs. Minnie Geiger  
 Frances H. Full  
 Mrs. Cora A. Lenihan  
 Mrs. Katherine Burg  
 Mrs. Anna B. Cannon  
 Mrs. Helen M. Paige  
 Mrs. Mary Mueller  
 Minnie M. Vogler  
 Hedwig C. Vogler  
 Mrs. E. J. Degenhardt  
 Mrs. Ina M. Cummings  
 Mrs. Maggie T. Madden  
 Mrs. Dorothy Yohn  
 Kathryn Coss  
 Mrs. Lucy Coss  
 Hattie E. H. Boyle  
 Mrs. Chas. Erbes  
 Mrs. Pauline P. Jacob  
 Mrs. Lydie H. Ruedy  
 Martha M. Jacob  
 Mrs. Susanna K. Kohl  
 Mrs. Mary E. Garard  
 Mrs. Chas. Kehm  
 Clara R. Schaller  
 Mrs. Bertha Schaller  
 Lena A. Vogler

Linda Ossman  
 Mrs. Annie Laura March  
 Mrs. Cora G. Bailey  
 Mrs. John C. Kehm  
 Miss Emilie Sylvia Kehm  
 Mrs. Katherine A. Kraemer  
 Irmagard E. Kohl  
 Mrs. Alice J. Potter  
 Mrs. Minnie Beitsch  
 Mrs. Minnie Roth  
 Mrs. Mary Anna Zapf  
 Mrs. Katherine E. Elsesser  
 Mrs. Gertrude L. Easter  
 Miss Helen M. Easter  
 Miss Elizabeth Langlitz  
 Miss Elinda D. Kohl  
 Mrs. Henrietta A. Faber  
 Mrs. Estella Tower  
 Mrs. Lucy E. Gesslein  
 Mrs. Jerome B. Phelps  
 Millie M. Phelps  
 Ruth March  
 Mrs. Anna L. Eckart  
 Mrs. Pauline Meyers  
 Mrs. Florence O. Black  
 Luella L. Gower  
 Josephine Ellingen  
 Blanch Lenore March  
 Mrs. Daisy Crandall  
 Mrs. Bertha Zolper  
 Mrs. Pearl Faber Schaller  
 Mrs. Burton Edwards  
 Mrs. Josephine Waldorf  
 Lida Vogler  
 Mabel D. Madden  
 Mrs. Louise Lucas  
 Miss Tessie Zolper

1923 marked a year of great activity for the American Legion Auxiliary, Post No. 540. Officers at that time were:

President.....Mrs. Bert Field  
 Vice President.....Miss Lena Vogler  
 Vice President...Mrs. Wm. Mortenson  
 Secretary.....Miss Elinda Kohl  
 Treasurer.....Miss Martha Jacob

Chaplain.....Mrs. Geo. Kohl  
 Sergeant-at-Arms.....Mrs. W. Neff  
 Historian.....Miss Clara Schaller  
 Organist.....Mrs. Ed. Mueller

In May, the handsome, silk United States flag was dedicated.

A large bazaar was held November 8, 9 and 10th to celebrate Armistice Day, at which \$1,209.82 was cleared. In later years a Minstrel Show was held from which \$500 was cleared.

From money secured from the above, and like projects, contributions were made to Hines Hospital, Elgin State Hospital, Dwight Veterans' Hospital, Normal Cottage for the World War orphans at Normal, Illinois, and similar institutions.

In March of 1933 the Post entertained the District Director, Mrs. Miles and on April 9, 1933, Mrs. Melville Mucklestone of Chicago was the speaker at one of the Woman's Club programs, to which all auxiliary members were invited. Mrs. Mucklestone was guest of honor at a luncheon given by the past president and all past presidents of the auxiliary were guests. At that time a past president's parley was organized.

In 1944, with Mrs. Maurice Smith as president, the post celebrated its 20th anniversary at the Methodist church. A dinner was held honoring the 20-year members and at that time each 20-year member was given a pin.

Each year the Unit recognizes, with an appropriate remembrance, the Gold Star mothers. Past Presidents of the post are:

Miss Myrtle Beitsch	January 1920
Mrs. Clarence Potter	January 1921 (6 mos.)
Miss Clara Schaller	January 1922 (6 mos.)
Mrs. Ed. Mueller	January 1923
Mrs. Bert Field	January 1925 (2 yrs.)
Mrs. George Kohl	January 1926
Mrs. Olive Mortonson	January 1927
Miss Catherine Coss	January 1928
Mrs. Bert Field	January 1929
Mrs. C. E. Merritt	November 1930
Mrs. Wm. Faber, Jr.	October 1931
Mrs. M. E. Steele	September 1932
Miss Clara Schaller	September 1933
Mrs. Josephine T. Coss	September 1934
Mrs. Henry Kohl	September 1935
Mrs. W. J. Saunders	September 1936
Mrs. Walter Elsesser	September 1937
Mrs. W. J. Saunders	September 1938
Mrs. Harrison Paige	September 1939
Mrs. Harry Cannon	September 1940
Mrs. Harry Schaller	September 1941
Mrs. Harry T. Doty	September 1942
Mrs. Alexander Wylie	September 1943
Mrs. Raena Brown	September 1944
Mrs. Maude Smith	September 1945
Mrs. Forrest Bankes	September 1946
Mrs. Ralph Jacob	September 1947
Mrs. Victor Schuhler	September 1948
Mrs. Harold F. Dean	September 1949
Mrs. Nora Yost	September 1950
Mrs. Frank Fassig	September 1951
Mrs. Katherine Coffey	September 1952
Mrs. Harry T. Doty	September 1953

The 1953 roster of officers is as follows: President, Mrs. Harry T. Doty; 1st Vice President, Mrs. Fred Gustafson; 2nd Vice President, Mrs. Frank Driver; Secretary, Mrs. Henry Kohl; Treasurer, Mrs. Josephine T. Coss; Historian, Mrs. Harold F. Dean; Sergeant-at-Arms, Mrs. Gerald Truckenbrod; Chaplain, Mrs. Thos. Coffey.

# VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS

SEPTEMBER, 1944, through the efforts of Wm. Neilson and William Faber Sr. the Veterans of Foreign Wars organization of Rockford was contacted in an effort to start a post in Mendota. Two men were sent to Mendota: Clinton Spackman (Sixth district commander at the time) from the Belvidere post, and Norman Allen (a past sixth district Commander, and past state Commander) from the Rockford post. These men assisted in getting the foundation laid for organizing Mendota Post No. 4079.

Only a few boys were back from World War II; so the initial membership was mostly World War I men. Just 14 men were interested in organizing. But after much thoughtful planning these few men decided to go ahead with their plans in the hopes of having an active post when the boys in service returned. In September, 1945, in the Hotel Faber Gold Room the first Veterans of Foreign Wars post in Mendota was organized.

The charter members were: Don Tower, Tracy Tower, Ralph Jacob, Rudolph Lucas, John Boisdorf Sr., Edward Yohn, Wm. Neilson, George Van Meter Sr., Wm. Faber Sr., John Rutishauser Jr., Jack Anderson, Theodore Kratz Jr., Claude Anderson and Rheinhold Ossman.

The first officers of the Post were: Theodore Kratz Jr., commander; Don Tower, Sr., vice-commander; Rudolph Lucas, Jr., vice-commander; George Van Meter, Sr., quartermaster; and Ralph Jacob, chaplain.

The post grew in members rapidly as boys returned from service, and there were soon 76 members. The membership has increased to 225.

Meetings were held in various places at first and then the old K. of C. hall was rented and meetings were held there. In 1949 this hall was secured as a permanent club room. The hall was remodeled into a fine club and meeting room.

Past commanders are: Theodore Kratz Jr., Harold Foster, Lambert Stremlau, Louis Sauer, Clarence Dobberstein, Don Oberlander, and Ray Cook. Willis Snyder is commander at present.

## V.F.W. AUXILIARY

THROUGH THE COMBINED EFFORTS of Commander of The Veterans of Foreign Wars Ted Kratz Jr., and Mrs. Alice Lucas (deceased) the



Veterans of Foreign Wars Auxiliary was started May 17, 1946 in the Masonic hall.

Mrs. Harold Foster was elected first president. Mrs. Signe L. Johnson of Rockford was the instituting officer, assisted by the Sterling color team and conductress Hazel Allai.

At that meeting an Altar Bible was presented the auxiliary by Mr. and Mrs. Fred Allai of Sterling. Mrs. Allai was formerly Hazel Serven of Mendota.

Eighteen members took the obligation that first night. There is now a membership of 84.

Meetings are held on the first and third Mondays of each month. They were first held in the Hotel Faber Gold Room, then in the homes until the present Club Rooms were available.

As with all veterans organizations the Auxiliary's work is to assist veterans, veterans' families, veteran hospitals and helping maintain a veterans' home.

The following have served as presidents:

Mrs. Harold Foster.....	1946	Mrs. Raymond Burkhart.....	1951
Mrs. Albert Love.....	1947	Mrs. John Rutishauser Jr.....	1952
Mrs. Louis Sauer.....	1948 and 1949	Mrs. Ray Johnson.....	1953
Mrs. Howard Brucker.....	1950		

## CATHOLIC WAR VETERANS

ARCHBISHOP J. L. SPALDING POST No. 1502 was organized September 22, 1947. A meeting was called of all Catholic veterans in the Mendota area in the V. F. W. Clubrooms, then the K of C hall. William Moynahan, Chicago, State Aide was present and in charge of organizing the post. Twenty eight veterans of World Wars I and II were present and signed as charter members. A slate of officers was elected with Louis J. Kerns as commander. The name of Archbishop J. L. Spalding was chosen in honor of the first bishop of Peoria. Rev. Paul Hettinger, pastor of Sts. Peter and Paul church, Peterstown, and chaplain in the army during World War II, was chosen as post chaplain.

Post membership included Catholic veterans from Mendota, Peterstown, Earlville, and Amboy. The post is part of a nation wide organization which maintains a legislative lobby in the nation's capital and which has an official observer at UN meetings.

The purpose of the organization is to guard the rights and privileges of all veterans, protect our freedom, defend our Faith, help our sick and disabled, care for the widows and orphans, assist those in need, aid in youth activities, promote Catholic action and Americanism

and to offer Catholic veterans an opportunity to band together for social and athletic activities.

The Catholic War Veterans are dedicated to a program of united action to promote the welfare of all veterans. The groups are pledged to an out and out fight against atheistic Communism and all other isms that are inimical to the American form of government.

The Catholic War Veterans have been approved by His Holiness Pope Pius XI, His Holiness Pope Pius XII, His Eminence Samuel Cardinal Stritch of Chicago, and by Presidents Franklin D. Roosevelt and Harry S. Truman. They are recognized and certified by the Veterans Administration and authorized to represent the claims of veterans before the Veterans Administration rating boards.

The Catholic War Veterans Inc. is a Catholic organization in so far as its membership and principles are concerned, but it is not under the direct control of either parish or diocesan authority. Being Catholic, it conforms to all Catholic Doctrine and practice. Chaplains are chosen by duly elected officers.

Applicants for membership must be American citizens, members of the Roman Catholic church, and they must have served in armed forces.

The post holds meetings on the fourth Thursday of each month in the Holy Cross school hall. From the 28 charter members in 1947 the post has grown to the present membership of 62. The post's first 2nd Vice Commander, William Auchstetter, was primarily responsible for the rapid increase in membership.

Louis Kerns served as commander during the first two years. Efforts during his term were directed towards increased membership and raising funds for post colors. The post immediately joined other local veterans organizations and civic groups taking part in local events such as flag raising ceremonies at football games; Armistice Day and Decoration day programs; placing of flags on veterans graves; military funerals; sweet corn festivals, etc.

John Henkel was elected commander for the 1949-50 term. During his term the post began its sponsorship of the Holy Cross basketball team, coached by Robert Faber, member of the post. The post equips the team with uniforms and balls, and enters them in the St. Bede parochial league. During the first year of their sponsorship the heavy-weight team won the league championship and first place in the Peoria Diocesan tournament.

Paul Kerns succeeded Henkel as commander of the post for the 1950-51 term and during his term the first Holy Cross athletic banquet

was held honoring the athletes of the school. The banquet has become an annual event. The 1951 State convention was held in LaSalle, Illinois with the local post acting as co-host with posts in LaSalle and Peru. The post joined the other local veterans posts, during his term, in raising funds for the purpose of furnishing a room in the Mendota Community Hospital.

Delbert Spitz was elected commander for the 1951-52 term. An Auxiliary to the post was formed during this term. The Auxiliary, consisting of wives, mothers, and sisters of the post members, assist the post at communion breakfasts, basketball banquets and other events.

Clarence Dobberstein, commander of the post at the present time, is primarily responsible for the present membership strength. He has spent many hours contacting eligible veterans, bringing new members into the post and obtaining membership renewals.

Father Hettinger has acted as chaplain since organization. He was appointed State Chaplain at the 1951 State Convention and served one year in that capacity. His encouragement and guidance have been a source of inspiration to the members and the post.

The post is active in church functions and parish projects, and cooperative in civic events. Annual participation in Corpus Christi ceremonies at Peterstown, reception of communion in a body at designated dates throughout the year; participation in the corner stone laying ceremony at the Mendota Community Hospital; cooperating with the local Chamber of Commerce in canvassing for census, mobile X-ray units etc; establishing blood donors lists at the local hospital and St. Mary's hospital LaSalle; and participating in community affairs are all part of the Catholic War Veterans program.

The post plans to present an award to the boy student earning the highest average in American history and religious instruction at Holy Cross and Peterstown schools. The Post Auxiliary will make a similar presentation to the girl student in each school obtaining the highest average in the two subjects.

## CATHOLIC WAR VETERANS AUXILIARY

FEBRUARY 28, 1952 A MEETING was held in the Holy Cross school for the purpose of organizing a Catholic War Veterans auxiliary of the Archbishop J. L. Spalding Post No. 1502.

Delbert Spitz, post commander explained to the 12 potential members the meaning of the Catholic War Veterans organization and its

history. Mrs. Irene Kowalczyk of LaSalle, who was state aide and president of St. Hyacinth Auxiliary, explained the purpose.

Another meeting was held March 10 in the home of Mrs. Paul Kerns. The following officers were elected: Mrs. Phyllis Spitz, president; Mrs. Marion Burkart, first vice president; Mrs. Marge Murphy, second vice president; Mrs. Camilla Kerns, third vice president; Mrs. Hildegard Kerns, secretary; Mrs. Anna Marie Stremlau, treasurer; Mrs. Evelyn Steil, welfare worker; Mrs. Dorothy Dobberstein, historian; Mrs. Eleanor Oberlander, ritual officer and chaplain aide.

Trustees elected were: Mrs. Herman Nelson, Mrs. Patricia Wagner, and Mrs. Kathryn Coffey.

Father Paul Hettinger was to serve as chaplain.

The new organization accepted the offer of the use of the Veterans of Foreign Wars club room as a place to hold meetings, held the second Monday of each month.

At the May meeting Mrs. Margaret Schmidt, Peterstown, and Mrs. Josephine Coss, Mendota, Gold Star mothers, were presented with memberships in the auxiliary.

The Auxiliary donates to various projects and has been active in local activities as well as with state and national projects. They have sponsored shows, public card parties, and served meals for various organizations of the Catholic church to raise funds to carry on this work.

Mrs. Marian Burkart is 1953 president.

Members of the Auxiliary are:

Mrs. Wm. Auchstetter  
Mrs. Ray Burkart  
Mrs. James Caveglia  
Mrs. Thomas Coffey  
Mrs. Forrest Coffey  
Mrs. Clarence Dobberstein  
Mrs. J. P. Gallagher  
Mrs. Melvin Hoerner  
Mrs. Richard Jones  
Mrs. Paul Kerns  
Mrs. Louis Kerns  
Mrs. Lester Kerns  
Mrs. Charles Kuebel  
Mrs. Thomas Murphy  
Mrs. Donald Murphy  
Mrs. Evald Nelson  
Mrs. Donald Oberlander

Mrs. Leonard Schmidt  
Miss Delores Spitz  
Mrs. Delbert Spitz  
Mrs. Joseph Steil  
Mrs. L. J. Stephenitch  
Mrs. Donald Stephenitch  
Mrs. Richard Stephenitch  
Mrs. Lambert Stremlau  
Mrs. Joseph Stremlau  
Mrs. Fred Wagner  
Mrs. Leslie Dinges  
Mrs. Matilida Hettinger  
Mrs. Julia Sondgeroth  
Mrs. Clara Schneider  
Mrs. Wilma Sondgeroth  
Mrs. Clarence Dinges

#### *Gold Star Mothers*

Mrs. Josephine Coss

Mrs. Margaret Schmidt



# NAVY MOTHERS CLUB

THE MENDOTA CHAPTER of the Navy Mothers club of America No. 560 was organized in the home of Mrs. Harry Elsesser by the state organizer, Mrs. Emil Hassley, of Ottawa.

September 18, 1944, the first officers were installed by Mrs. Hassley and Captain Doolittle of the Great Lakes naval station. The officers were: commander, Mrs. Henrietta Faber; first vice-commander, Mrs. Henrietta Fassig; second vice-commander, Mrs. Helen Trout; secretary, Mrs. Marie Tower; chaplain, Mrs. Grace Brown; judge advocate, Mrs. Anna Knox; matrons-at-arms, Mrs. Pauline Pry and Mrs. Mable Stein; color bearers, Mrs. Henrietta Elsesser and Mrs. Hazel Michael.

Twenty-seven members signed the charter. At present there are 53 members.

The purpose of the organization is to further the welfare of all boys in the Navy, particularly those confined in Naval Hospitals, and to supply little comforts and luxuries which add to their well-being and happiness.

Meetings are held on the third Monday evening of each month in the homes of the members.

The club works hard at raising money and making articles for naval hospitals. Sewed articles are also sent to many veterans hospitals in Illinois. They also support community projects and give annually to many worthwhile state and national projects. All money received from their annual tag day is used for service men and women in hospitals and any needing assistance while in our city. With money realized from these tag days, the Navy Mothers have been able to purchase many valuable gifts and to make generous cash donations. Sons in service are sent gifts on their birthdays. Five dollars is sent to any Mendota sailor boy if he is hospitalized.

Mrs. Henrietta Faber, Mrs. Henrietta Fassig, Mrs. Helen Trout, Mrs. Grace Brown, Mrs. Sylvia Preston, Mrs. Ila Westerman, and Mrs. Rose Gish have served as commanders. Mrs. Alma Sibigroth is serving at the present time.

Those eligible for membership are mothers of boys who have been or are in the United States Navy, Naval Reserves, Seabees, Marines, or Coast Guard.

# CAMP FIRE GIRLS

ORGANIZED AND INCORPORATED IN 1912, the credit is largely due to Dr. and Mrs. Luther Gulick, whose philosophy of living with their family of girls permeated the ideals of the Camp Fire program. With their daughters they appreciated the value of creative activities, making fun out of house work, association with the out-of-doors and participation in sports. They adroitly wove all of these things together with Indian lore and symbolism. Above all they taught them reverence for their creator and gave them the watchword of Camp Fire: work, health, and love. Friendship and loyalty were stressed.

Later the little sister organization, the Blue Birds, was set up. Little girls of seven began with supervised play centering around the home. Group consciousness and good citizenship was developed from their association with each other. When the Blue Bird reached the age of ten she could "fly up" to Camp Fire Girls.

In Mendota the first group of Camp Fire Girls was started in 1914 with Miss Mildred Faber as the guardian. They were called the "Onaway" group. It was composed of the following members: Hazel Mae Nisley Reese, Lucile Potter Holliston, Gladys Lamberton, Cleo Murphy Maus, Florence Bates Cook, Florence Lewis McGown, Marie Bailey Tower, Marie Bierwirth, Georgia Kliyla Niebergal, (deceased) Helen Miller (deceased), and Gertrude Cavell. The group was active until 1917.

In 1916 Miss Mary Coffey, history teacher of Blackstone high school, organized the "Atodnem" Camp Fire Girls. She was assisted by Pearl Faber Schaller and Isabel Pohl. The members consisted of: Adrienne Fassett Faber, Linda Kohl, Esther Crawford James, Elizabeth Colson Young, Virginia Haskel Skinner, Sophia Lucas, Edith Shaw (deceased), Henrietta Kanner Faber, Edna Grosch Morehouse, Helen Schildberg Dayton, and Clara Powell Beatty. For three years they were active.

Josephine Tower Coss and Miss Lila Powell each sponsored a large group of girls, started in 1936. They were active until 1940.

The flame of the fire was determined not to die completely. It was revived in 1951. The organization was sponsored by the Public Welfare Department of the Women's Club of Mendota. It was the outgrowth of a desire expressed by many little girls to have some similar group such as the Boy Scouts.

The nucleus from which this organization grew was a committee of five women composed of Mrs. C. W. Ekstrom, chairman; Mrs. R. H. Musick, Mrs. Robert Ellingen, Mrs. Ed Lorack and Mrs. William Stockus.

Mrs. Charles Small of Princeton, district director, assisted in setting up the program and instructing the leaders. The leaders were interested parents of Lincoln, Blackstone and Holy Cross schools. Women who were not parents but interested in children gave their support, too. By spring of the first year there were 170 happy, busy girls in this new enterprise. The enrollment has grown to 225.

The following summer a program of directed activities in handicrafts, games and singing was conducted by Mrs. Small.

For the past two years the Boy Scouts and Camp Fire Girls have cooperated in the production of a pageant. This occurs in February to commemorate the birthday of Boy Scouts and involves the training and direction of 500 children.

To be a worthwhile citizen is one of the objectives. The girls have participated in several community projects. For the past two years they have dyed Easter eggs for the community easter egg hunt. Last spring they distributed city maps to Mendota homes. In cooperation with the Lions club they sold all the tags for the Cancer Fund. Every group has helped in making tray favors for the Community Hospital and the Lutheran Home.

The leaders and standing committee saw the need for more support in the program as the size of the groups grew far beyond expectations. Miss Janet Murray, field adviser, came to Mendota and gave instructions on how to form a council. Chris Troupis was elected president, Mrs. Carl Ekstrom, vice-president and Mrs. Peter Cresto, secretary-treasurer. The Council now takes full responsibility for finance, getting new leaders, instructing leaders and maintaining a community awareness for full cooperation in the program.

## BOY SCOUTS

THE BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA was chartered by Congress in February, 1910.

In 1915 the first Scout troop was organized in Mendota, by a group of parents. This troop continued until September, 1915, when its leader left for service in the army during World War I. It was reorganized in the fall of 1917 and continued until 1923, when it was again discontinued because of a lack of interest on the part of any sponsoring group. In 1925, another troop was organized and continued for two years until its leader moved from the city.

In 1928, a La Salle county group, realizing the need of a stable organization for the promotion of the Boy Scout program, organized

the Starved Rock council and employed a full time professional Scout executive to organize troops and train leaders, that the Scout program might be a continuous force for good in the lives of boys throughout the county. Several Mendota citizens took a prominent part in this move and were influential in the organization of this Council.

At this time the first Scout troop, under the council plan was organized in Mendota by the Mendota Post of the American Legion. Soon after, a second troop was organized by the Elks club.

At present there are four Scout troops, two Cub packs, and one Explorer Post in operation in Mendota.

The four Scout troops are: Troop 101, sponsored by the Men's Brotherhood of the Lutheran church; Troop 102, sponsored by the Holy Cross school; Troop 104, sponsored by the Men's Fellowship of the Baptist church; and Troop 106, sponsored by the Men's Fellowship of the Methodist church.

The two Cub packs (the Scouts kid brothers) comprised of boys ages eight to eleven, are: Cub Pack 108, sponsored by the Lincoln School Parent Teachers association; and Cub Pack 109, sponsored by the Blackstone Parent Teachers association.

The Explorer Post (the Scouts older brothers) comprised of boys over 14 years of age, is Explorer Post 110, which was formerly Scout troop 110, and has been sponsored by the Mendota Post of the American Legion continuously since its organization in 1928.

At the present time there are approximately 250 boys enrolled in these Scout units, with 25 men and women leaders.

## HOME BUREAU

THE MENDOTA UNIT of the Home Bureau was organized in the fall of 1920 by a group of about ten ladies.

The meeting was held in the home of Mrs. Philip Yenerich. Officers elected were Mrs. Ursula Setchell, director; Mrs. Ed Brum, vice-director; Mrs. Samuel Beetz, secretary; and Mrs. Dana Miller, treasurer.

Meetings are held on the second Tuesday of each month with the exception of August at which time a family picnic is held. There is also a family party once each winter. For many years meetings were held in the homes but as the unit grew it was necessary to find a larger place. At present, meetings are held in the Masonic Hall.

The object of this organization is the promotion and development of home making and community life. During the years almost all



phases of home making have been covered, but still new and interesting methods are being developed.

The Home Bureau has taken an active part in community affairs. Many years ago a pageant depicting Home Bureau activities was presented at the Mendota Fair. Benefit suppers were served for the Fair association with as many as 1200 served in one year. The most important project sponsored by the Home Bureau is the Girls 4-H club.

The following have been active in the organization since its beginning: Mrs. Samuel Beetz, Mrs. Laura Waldorf, Mrs. Dorsey Deaner and Mrs. Dana Miller.

There are now 45 members in the Mendota unit.

The officers for 1953 are, Mrs. Harold Scheidenhelm, director; Mrs. Clayton Minch, vice-director; Mrs. Nora Yost, secretary and treasurer; Mrs. Edward Gordon, program chairman; Miss Edith Miller, recreation chairman; Mrs. Glen Lines, 4-H club leader.

## LINCOLN P.T.A.

AT LINCOLN SCHOOL a home and school organization was started in 1918. Meetings were held on the third floor of the old Lincoln school, and as there was no electricity available on this floor the members brought lamps and lanterns to furnish light. Refreshments were always served at the close of each meeting, a custom which is still observed.

Mrs. Charles Erbes was the first president. The first project of this organization was the mid-morning serving of milk to the children, especially those under weight.

Milk was bought by the gallon and taken to the school and bottled by a committee of mothers. Each week a different group did the work. After three years the dairies agreed to bottle and deliver the milk. Milk is still available to students in the lower grades.

In about 1921 this organization became known at the Parent Teacher organization and joined the state and national association, with which it is still affiliated.

Other projects of the P.T.A. have been purchasing playground equipment, rain coats for the patrol boys, assisting in buying band instruments and refurnishing the Kindergarten room.

Each month a room award is given to the room with the highest percentage of parents and friends attending the meeting. Each Christmas a tree is provided for the school and treats furnished for all the students.

In recent years Lincoln P.T.A. has sponsored a Cub Scout troop. The following have served as presidents:

Mrs. Charles Erbes  
Mrs. Roy Morrill  
Mrs. Olive Mortonson (Cook)  
Mrs. Lewis Larson  
Mrs. Hugh Kibler  
Mrs. Frank Fassig  
Mrs. Charles Salander  
Mrs. Clarence Gilman  
Mrs. Gwen Heininger  
Mrs. Wm. Faber  
Mrs. Forrest Fahler  
Mrs. H. W. Mauntel

Mrs. Elmer Beitsch  
Mrs. Robert Cummings  
Mrs. Virgil Scott  
Mrs. Nora Yost  
Mrs. Phoebe Loach  
Mrs. Elmer Brown  
Mrs. Harold Owens  
Mrs. Ada Truckenbrod  
Mrs. Earl Yost  
Mrs. R. W. McKenzie  
Mrs. Lloyd Doenier  
Mrs. Marvin Schlesinger  
Mrs. Albert Pohl

For the year 1953-1954 a custom of long standing has been broken and a father, J. D. Wheeler, was elected president.

## BLACKSTONE P.T.A.

A PARENT TEACHER GROUP called "The Home and School Organization" was begun at Blackstone school March 15, 1918.

Professor Snapp acted as chairman at this first meeting when the following officers were elected: Mrs. Harry Wright, president; Mrs. Amos Rutt, vice president; Mrs. Charles McCray, secretary; and Mrs. George Niebergall, treasurer. Twenty-nine signed the first membership roll.

The year closed with an all day picnic with about 400 present.

In 1919 the group began its first big project, furnishing a rest room for teachers. In May that year Lincoln and Blackstone Home and School organizations met at the high school for a joint meeting. These joint meetings were held every other month.

Each year the dads sponsor one meeting, the first one was in 1921.

At a joint meeting on June 18, 1921, a new constitution was adopted and the organizations became known as "The Parent Teacher Association" and were affiliated with the state and national association.

Serving milk to the school children was the major proeject at the time of organization. Many activities have been carried on through the years to raise the money to carry on this project and the many others that presented themselves.

In 1928 the two P.T.A. organizations were hosts to the district conference with five counties represented.

In 1931 Blackstone withdrew from the state association and has since acted as an independent group.

A Cub Scout troop is sponsored by Blackstone P.T.A. It was begun in 1945 under the leadership of Mrs. Dallas Wulf. Mr. and Mrs. William Nashold and Mr. and Mrs. Harold Goebel have done splendid work as leaders. This parent-teacher organization has always been ever ready to help by giving library books, purchasing movie or playground equipment, or giving a decorated christmas tree and treat to the pupils.

After plans were completed for a new school building the P.T.A. held open house for all friends of "Old Blackstone."

## HOLY CROSS MOTHERS CLUB

THE HOLY CROSS MOTHERS CLUB was organized in October, 1946, with Mrs. Raymond Lipke as president; Mrs. Leo Hochstatter, vice president; Mrs. Ethel Massey, secretary; and Mrs. Elsie Gorman, treasurer.

The club is comprised of mothers having children attending Holy Cross school.

The pastor of Holy Cross church, Msgr. Leo Wissing, is the spiritual adviser and counselor of the club.

Meetings are held the first Monday of each month. At the present time the membership is 88.

The objects of this club are: promotion of mutual understanding between parent and teacher, stimulation of the desire of each member to be of service in promoting the educational and spiritual advantages of Holy Cross School, and supplying funds to better equip the school.

The biggest project each year is the hot lunch program. In the beginning the meals were prepared and served by the mothers. Now two ladies are in charge of the meals and the serving is done by the eighth grade girls. Other projects are sponsoring patrol boys, accident insurance for children while at school, basketball with its needed equipment, and serving a breakfast for the children on First Friday.

A film projector and films, playground and school room equipment, as well as equipment for the hot lunch program have been purchased by the club. Each year \$100 is given for school room materials such as maps and globes. At each meeting the room having the most mothers present is given \$2 for its own use.

Besides taking care of the needs of the school the Club also contributes to civic affairs such as the Mendota Community Hospital, Camp Fire Girls, Boy Scouts, and Red Cross.

# MENDOTA ATHLETIC BOOSTER SOCIETY (MABS)

IT WAS A COLD BLUSTERY DAY at a track meet in Ottawa in the spring of 1946. The plain-shirted Mendota track stars were doing their very best under existing conditions.

At this track meet interested local fans saw the need for an organization to promote "the encouragement of better athletics and better sportsmanship in the community."

The Mendota Athletic Booster Society "grass-roots" were really formed at a dinner in a small tea room in South Ottawa after the above mentioned track meet. In attendance at this dinner were Mr. and Mrs. Kenneth B. Butler, Mr. and Mrs. LeRoy Faber and Mr. and Mrs. J. Chris Serup who originated the club and selected the MABS name. Ideas for forming and naming the new athletic organization was the complete subject of conversation all through the dinner hour and during the drive home to Mendota. An objective in naming the club was to have the initial Letter of each word in the name so the complete initials would spell a word — MABS was the result.

In the spring of 1946 Chris Serup was asked to M.C. the athletic banquet at the Mendota Township high school. This presented an opportunity to present the MABS idea. Ken Butler was called upon to introduce the new club, to the athletic fans. Favorable reaction followed and on August 19, 1946, a preliminary organization meeting was held. In attendance were Kenneth Butler, LeRoy Faber, Elmer Beitsch, James Dubbs, Alfred Jacob, Gale Clinite, J. Chris Serup. Plans were made and James Dubbs was appointed chairman of a nominating committee to present a slate of officers.

Chris Serup acted as temporary chairman of the first public meeting to formally organize the MABS and select a permanent group of officers. In preliminary meetings it had been decided that the officers would not be called president, vice-president, secretary, treasurer and board of directors — but to better connect them with sports by naming the executive group as follows: Manager, Coach, Trainer and Board of Strategy.

Officers elected were George Elsesser, Manager; Martin "Gabby" Masear, Coach; Paul Jacob, Trainer; and the following on the Board of Strategy: Pete Cresto, Edward Brown, Louis Spenader, Elmer Beitsch, LeRoy Faber, Alfred Jacob, Kenneth B. Butler, Chris Serup, Dr. Dean Mosher, Gale Clinite, Dr. B. C. Hartford and Ivan Smith.

The first meeting by the new officers was held September 3, 1946



in the Mendota Elks Club. James Dubbs wrote the by-laws. Briefly the by-laws stated the purpose of the society is to support, sustain, advance, promote and encourage athletic events and sportsmanship in the community. Membership is open to all persons over the age of 17 who are not students in any of the schools of the community and are interested in the promotion of athletics.

MABS memberships have gradually increased from 248 their first year to a present record number of 536. Dues are \$1 per year. Most charter members are still active. All funds are expended exclusively for athletic promotion.

The MABS is now in its seventh year and have had the following Managers in the order named. George Elsesser, Peter Cresto, Robert Sonntag, Gilbert Truckenbrod, Chris Serup, Harry Potter and Dan Heltness. Through the excellent cooperation of all officers, school officials, coaches and the public this society has grown to be one of the most active athletic booster clubs in existence today.

Among the many promotions sponsored by the MABS since its inception are the following:

Annual MTHS athletic banquet honoring the schools athletes as guests, with top rank university coaches or professional stars as speakers and 300-400 in attendance; providing programs at athletic contests through sale of advertising; design and construction of football scoreboard at MTHS football field, building broadcasting booth and providing sound at the MTHS football field, also sound for the MTHS basketball games.

The society assisted in the sale of season and reserve seat tickets; moved bleachers annually from fairground to football field to provide extra seating capacity; sold advertising and provided collection boxes at football games to originate a sizable bleacher fund to be used for new bleachers at Mendota high school. The past year this fund was materially augmented through well managed sponsorship of two professional wrestling shows in the school gym.

The MABS also erected basketball backboards and hoops at Holy Cross school, Lincoln school, Blackstone school and on several playground places throughout the city; promoted grade school interest in sports and recognition of honorary awards to participants; helped provide ice skating rink; donated plaques to schools for inscribing the name of the basketball free throw champions each year and also presented a trojan head medal for several years to the senior athlete adjudged the most valuable athlete in all sports, Don Beitsch being the recipient of the first such award and Al Loach the second; provided

supplies and awards for Mendota sand lot baseball and our former American Legion Junior ball club.

The club financially supports the Little League each year; promoted swimming meets at Lake Mendota; erected signs directing traffic to high school; purchased film in 1951 and provided photographer to film a MHS football and basketball game to assist coaches in training and also for entertainment purposes. From time to time a sound truck was engaged to promote interest in games to boost attendance.

Two former MTHS stars have been honored after attaining success in the professional ranks. On Nov. 10, 1946, a caravan of 200 fans proceeded to Chicago for Frank Seno day in Comiskey Park, the scene of a Cardinal-Packer football game. Frank was a star back on the Cardinal squad. In that year he set a record of the longest kick off return in the National league. However, Frank Seno day was not a lucky day for the Cards as they came out on the short end of the score. Between halves the MABS presented Frank with a traveling bag.

On June 13, 1949, a similar honor was bestowed upon Don Whitmore who achieved success in the pro ranks as a baseball pitcher. A large group of MABS fans motored to Kewanee to see Don fling 'em for the Kewanee Boilers who were a farm team of the Philadelphia Athletics. For this occasion the MABS presented Don with a set of golf clubs.

The by-laws of the MABS require at least four meetings annually. Many special meetings are held by the officers to promote special events such as annual athletic banquet, membership drives, wrestling matches, etc.

The official emblem of the MABS is a four leaf clover of solid purple color and the initials of the organization are etched on a gold background. Inscribed in circle over the top of emblem are the words — "Mendota Athletic Booster Society" — and on a bar across the bottom "To Encourage Community Athletics." The MABS has lived up to its name and slogan in the promotion of athletics in the community.

## FUTURE FARMERS OF AMERICA

THE MENDOTA CHAPTER OF F. F. A. was organized October 7, 1929, by George Mercer, agriculture instructor in the Mendota high school at that time.

The following names appear on the charter which hangs in the agriculture room: Willard Austin, Richard Betz, James Cary, Donald

Clark, Vincent Coss, Elmer Ehlers, Irvin Englehardt, Russel Fahler, Harold Grosch, Joseph Guilfoyle, Alan Huss, Curtis Hochstatter, Forest Howarth, Everett Althaus, Gilbert Withrow, Herman Ehlers, Laurence Guilfoyle, Lester Betz, Ralph Ultch, Carl Stamberger, Vernon Setchell, Elton Stauffer, Delman Sondgeroth, Frances Simpson, Donald Richert, Erman Olson, Donald Larrabee, Guy Keen, Warren Kidd.

In the past years other advisors have been Sherwood Jackson and Fred Morris.

Meetings are held monthly. They organize at the start of each new year, when committees are appointed and plans are made.

The club is self-financed by various projects.

The main event each year is the parent-son banquet. Other events are leadership camp each fall, project tours, all-school party, bowling, swimming and checker tournament

Outstanding graduates in recent years have been Marlin Hoelzer, Kenneth Piller, Robert Wilhelm, Lyle Truckenbrod, and Kenneth Finley.

Each spring Mendota F.F.A. takes part in sectional public speaking contests as well as parliamentary procedure training.

## THE MENDOTA KANTEEN

THE MENDOTA YOUTH CENTER, affectionately known as the Kanteen, has just celebrated its tenth anniversary with the outstanding record of being the only youth center in the midwest to operate as a self-supporting and non-profit organization for this continuous length of time.

The Kanteen was conceived and organized by the Mendota Lions club in 1943 and patterned after the student-operated youth center in Moline, which has since failed. Funds were solicited and two floors of the old Huss and Bush shoe store on Main street were secured for the recreational plans being drawn up by the high school students and the Lions' boys and girls committee. Second hand furniture and equipment was bought, borrowed and begged to fill the space and requirements of a teen ager's hangout. These things have since been replaced by newer and better pieces.

The Kanteen is operated by a 16-member board of students, representing each high school class and an adult supervisor. A board of eight mothers takes care of the purchasing, special events, chaperon-

ing, etc. The Kanteen is open five nights a week and is supervised and chaperoned by mothers who follow a rotating system.

Forms of recreation provided are bowling on two regulation alleys, billiards, pool, shuffle board, ping pong, dancing, juke box, pianos, soda fountain, special program each Saturday night and a big party once a month. On Sunday night, the members are allowed to serve as chaperones with the assistance of one adult.

Financing of the organization is done by charging 25c per person a month, an annual tag day, food sale, carnival, public dinners and other special events put on either by the parents or the members. The Lions club shares its responsibility of the organization by paying for repairs or purchasing equipment.

Three hundred boys and girls are now members of the Kanteen and many of the former ones who reside in Mendota are now serving as chaperones. All rules, regulations, forms of punishment, and plans are made by the young people themselves which probably accounts for the success of the Kanteen.

## CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

ORGANIZED SEPTEMBER 7, 1945, by a group of foresighted and civic-minded citizens, the Chamber of Commerce had L. J. Oester as the first president. Other officers were Ralph Jacob, first vice-president; C. J. Haynes, second vice-president; Art Goslin, treasurer; and A. H. Calderwood, temporary secretary.

The following have also served as president of the organization: John Black, 1947; Horace Hume, 1948-1949; Vic Demler, 1950; Virgil M. Scott, 1951; E. A. Lorack, 1952; and J. Chris Serup, 1953.

The Chamber of Commerce was organized: (1) To coordinate, promote and develop commerce, business, industry and trade in the City of Mendota and vicinity; (2) To promote and assist charitable, benevolent, research, educational, civic, patriotic, athletic and recreational organizations and activities in the City of Mendota and vicinity; (3) To promote and assist agricultural organizations and activities and encourage soil, crop, and poultry improvements in the vicinity of Mendota. The Chamber has always tried to keep these purposes uppermost when considering what projects and activities to promote.

In October, 1945, Walter T. Woodcock was selected secretary-manager of the Chamber of Commerce. Offices were soon opened in their present location at 711½ Washington Street. When Mr. Wood-



cock resigned Frank Gulick was named. He was succeeded in April, 1949, by Hubert B. Crow present secretary-manager.

The annual sweet corn festival is a project of the Chamber. This activity has given Mendota nationwide publicity.

Each year the Chamber holds a banquet in the high school gymnasium, the first being held December 13, 1945. Some outstanding speakers have been presented at these annual dinner meetings, including Tom Collins, Edward McFaul and Roberto de la Rosa.

The Chamber of Commerce has striven at all times to better the town of Mendota in every way possible. They have attempted to help the city solve its many problems and to carry out its improvements. They have had a keen interest in developing new housing, bringing new industries into Mendota, and the promotion of the Community Hospital.

## JUNIOR CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

IN MARCH, 1950, four members of the Rock Island Junior Chamber of Commerce met with a group of Mendota men to form a Jaycee organization as a part of their extension program. The various parts of the JAYCEE program were explained. This same group returned to Mendota in April and after more explanation and discussion a local constitution was drawn up. The officers for this new organization were elected, as follows: president, Harold Stephenich; external vice-president, Robert Krenz; internal vice-president, Christ Troupis; treasurer, John Henkel; secretary, Charles Fahler; state director, Hubert Crow; Directors: William Faber, Ray Cook, Hubert Crow, and Dale Archer.

At a dinner meeting in July the local officers were installed by visiting guests, State President L. C. McGlothlan, Galesburg, and National Director Dean Madden, Decatur.

Regular dinner meetings were established for the second Wednesday of each month at 6:30 p.m. in the Gold Room of the Hotel Faber. Board meetings are held on the first and third Wednesday of each month at 8 p.m. in the Chamber of Commerce office.

The Mendota Jaycees entered a float in the National Jaycee parade in Chicago that first year. This not only won first place in the miscellaneous float division, but nation-wide publicity as being the youngest Jaycees at that time.

Their first local project was painting street names on the curbs. They sponsor a Hallowe'en window painting contest for the grade school pupils. Perhaps their most outstanding project is the building

of the Little League ball diamond and forming a Little League in Mendota. As a result of this there are now two diamonds in Mendota, the Little League diamond and the newly constructed Pony League diamond.

Christ Troupis served as president in 1951 and 1952. Charles Fahler served next, and Fred Swanson is the present president.

## LADIES GOLF CLUB

BACK IN THE TWENTIES the Mendota Ladies Golf club was far different than it is now. As far as organization is concerned, no records have been kept, but in actual fact business was much the same.

The following reminiscences are much more interesting at a time like this than cold records, — or naming individuals who belonged and who by now have stopped playing, moved away or died.

Dress seems to be much the talk at these centennial times; so perhaps a few observations on this would be of interest.

Every day you could see women playing, always in the heat of mid-day or early afternoon. They were bedecked with long sleeved jackets, a sweater or two, big brimmed hats drawn closer to their heads by long white rags or big handkerchiefs (they could not be dubbed scarves) tied under their chins to keep on the monstrosity.

Old hose had been saved from the rag bag and by dissecting the feet, regardless of their many runs, were drawn over their hands and up their arms where they were held in place by tight rubber bands. This assisted in keeping what sun might sift through the other paraphernalia from coming in contact with the flesh of the golf enthusiast, causing what is now one of the most desired effects — a sun tan. Long skirts were worn, never any anklets; and *never, never* bare legs. Strange as it may seem, everyone wore "golf mitts". Some even had them on both hands. This serious armour meant serious golf on the course.

Much advice was given then as now on the art of playing. Instructions were given mostly by individuals rather than professionals as now. It is an amazing thing, but people played seemingly as low scores then as now. Maybe their costume had something to do with it. Who knows?

Then there were those terrific scramble dinners held every Wednesday. Each brought her own table service and a covered dish. Eating was the main entertainment on those days, as well as an alibi for poor scores. Wednesday was an all around day, participated in by many

bridge players who never chased the little white ball around the course. These Wednesdays were banner days. The town offered little else in those times.

The first "club house" was a shack from the miniature golf course belonging to Frank Schwarz, and moved to the present location. Through the efforts of the lady golfers it was remodeled three times, but the last one was done entirely by the male members. The women cleaned, painted, and raised money for additional equipment which is now in use in the present building.

We must not forget the small caddies that were running around. The mechanical cart has been accepted to promote the game and lessen the effort, but one sort of misses the caddy.

No more do you see sights like these at the golf course. It has gotten out of its swaddling clothes and fledged into an aristocratic club. 1953 finds it an active, growing organization.

## 4H CLUB

4H IS A GROUP of young people brought together in organized work and play under the guidance of a 4H club leader in order to develop good citizenship, sound intelligence, high moral standards, better health, and good fellowship.

4H Club work is a part of the extension service in agriculture and home economics carried on by the U. S. Department of Agriculture and various colleges and universities.

To be an achievement member a boy or girl must: 1. complete all requirements of one project; 2. give a talk or demonstration; 3. exhibit product; 4. complete record book to be checked by the leader; 5. attend 2/3 of the meetings after enrollment.

The first 4H Club in La Salle County was organized in 1924.

The first record of any 4H Club in Mendota is 1929. The first leaders of which there is any record are Mrs. Ed Brown, Mrs. Hoeger, and Mrs. Witte in 1931. The club organized in 1929 was named the "Humming Birds."

Other leaders through the years have been: Mrs. Robert Erbes, Mrs. Leon Burright, Mrs. Clayton Minch, Mrs. Carl Betz, Mrs. Harvey Cook, Mrs. Jacob Schilt, Mrs. Bert Hotchkiss, Mrs. Roland Truckenbrod, Mrs. Glen Lines, and Mrs. William Auchstetter.

The present club is known as "Teens of Today" and has 23 members. The leaders are Mrs. Glen Lines and Mrs. William Auchstetter.

# HOSPITAL AUXILIARY

IN OCTOBER, 1949, while visiting the People's hospital at Peru with members of the medical committee for the Mendota Hospital Foundation, Dr. Edgar Cook became interested in organizing a Women's Hospital auxiliary. After conferring with Mrs. Cook they took immediate action by presenting the idea to the board of directors of the hospital. November 19, 1949, the board passed a resolution authorizing the establishment of the Women's Auxiliary to the Mendota Hospital Foundation.

On December 9, 1949, a meeting was called at the Lutheran parish house. All women's organizations in and around Mendota were asked to send representatives, and all interested were urged to attend. At this meeting temporary officers were elected: president, Mrs. Harvey Barth; vice-president, Mrs. Howard Rapp; secretary, Miss Ruth Karger; treasurer, Mrs. Harold Dean.

Committees were appointed, by-laws and constitution drawn up and the first annual meeting was held April 15, 1950. Temporary officers were elected to serve for the ensuing year. At this time a membership of over 1700 was reported.

Immediately work began. Bed sheets, pillow cases, hospital gowns, draw sheets, tray cloths, napkins and operating caps were made and stored until a suitable storage room was completed in the hospital.

In the summer fruits and vegetables were canned and stored. Many items were purchased, such as dishes, glassware, utensils, trays, and bedding. Sewing days were held all year.

Many schemes for making money have been employed: food sales, sponsoring movies, serving dinners, community auction, tag day, magazine subscriptions, and a hobby show. Money realized from these plus the dues of \$1 a member or \$100 for a life member enable the auxiliary to do many wonderful things they have been doing for the hospital.

Before the formal opening of the Hospital the Auxiliary worked faithfully cleaning and making ready for that great day. For several months after the opening many members acted as volunteer office workers.

Auxiliary units have also been organized in LaMoille, Perkins Grove, Ophir, Compton, Meriden, Troy Grove, Clarion, Triumph, Peterstown, Earlville, Chicago Road, West Brooklyn, Arlington, Paw Paw, and Brooklyn Lutheran Church.

Miss Ruth Karger and Mrs. Frank Prescott have also served as presidents. Mrs. Frank Fassig is president in 1953.



Members are signed up each year and the auxiliary now boasts of 1800 members.

Last year \$1000 was given toward the completion of the new wing, and the main portion of this year's earnings will be spent for equipping this new wing.

## NURSE'S CLUB

THE MENDOTA NURSE'S CLUB was organized at the Harris hospital September 7, 1943, but did not receive an official name until October 5, 1943.

The initial membership was made up of registered nurses, practical nurses and lay personnel employed at the hospital.

Mrs. Mabel Schreck was the first president and Miss Velma Baumgartner was the first secretary and treasurer.

The club has been both a social and a service group, and now with the establishment of the new Mendota Community hospital, it has become a professional organization as well.

Recent projects of the club have included the purchase of equipment for the laboratory at the hospital, a gift of insulin for a patient and a recent donation for a portable light and additional instruments for the surgical department. The members also assist at the Red Cross blood bank.

The current officers are Miss Esther Forth, president, and Miss Lucille Matychowiak, secretary and treasurer.

## MENDOTA ACCORDION BAND

WITH GLADYS LAMBERTON of Mendota as teacher, the accordion band was organized in 1948 under the direction of Ray Bannon of LaSalle.

Practices were held once a week in the social rooms of the Methodist church.

In the fall of 1948 the band parents organization was formed with Floyd L. Wells as president; Mrs. Ed Engelhardt, Paw Paw, vice-pres.; Mrs. Lile Erickson, secretary and treasurer. Mrs. Bert Rott and Harold Schlesinger were advisers.

There were about 30 members in the original band. After a few months of practice a second band was begun to take care of the

many wanting to play. That first year there were about 50 playing in the two bands.

Later on the band held its rehearsals at the Mendota Odd Fellows hall where it continued until the fall of 1952 when it moved to the Conco display building.

The band has been in the parade at the sweet corn festival and also given concerts. It also had its own queen represented.

Its first public concert was given on April 28, 1949, in the Mendota high school. Two local concerts have been given since. The group has played in many towns around Mendota as well as being in parades.

Many of the original members are not with the band at present but there is still a nice group who are under the leadership of Ray Chaon. A fine young band is coming on, with Miss Shirley Rasmussen, of Ladd, as teacher and leader.

Mrs. Henry Faber of Amboy and Mrs. Oliver Chaon of West Brooklyn have acted as president the past years.

The 1953 officers are: Floyd L. Wells, President; Harold Schlesinger, vice-president; and Floyd Blotch, secretary and treasurer.

The board members are: Wilbur Zinke, Mendota, Mrs. Oliver Chaon, West Brooklyn; Mrs. George Goetz, LaMoille; Floyd P. Shibson, Lостant.

## WEST END CLUB

The first meeting of this club was a picnic at the Al Prescott home on July 4, 1904. It began as a Larkin club. Mrs. Dana Miller has been president since the club's inception. It is a service club, active in Red Cross work and in sewing for the hospital. There are 25 members. Four of the original members are still in the group, including Mrs. Dana Miller, Mrs. Sarah Martin, Mrs. Tom Brown (now of Aurora), and Mrs. Dorsey Deaner Sr.

## ORGANIZATIONS WITHIN CHURCHES

Churches, whose histories are written in another chapter, have many hard-working organizations which meet regularly and keep alive the religious and social activities within their groups. Among these organizations are:

First Baptist Church — TuXis Class, Junior BY Fellowship, Junior-Hi BY Fellowship, Philathea Class, and Missionary Society.

Methodist Church — Woman's Society of Christian Service, Methodist Youth Fellowship, Methodist Men, Junior Choir, Senior Choir, First Sunday Nighters, Young Married Couples, Young Adult Group, Boy Scouts, Excelsior Circle, and four Women's Circles.

Holy Cross Catholic Church — St. Mary's Altar and Rosary Society, Catholic Daughters of America, Holy Name Society.

First Presbyterian Church — The Women's Association, King's Daughters Class, Young Adult Club, Senior-High Westminster Fellowship, Junior-High Westminster Fellowship.

Evangelical-United Brethren Church — Women's Society of World Service, Youth Fellowship, Men's Brotherhood, Young Adult Fellowship, True Blue Class, Little Heralds, and Mission Band.

St. John's Lutheran Church — Ladies Aid, Young Adult Group, Women's Missionary Society, Jr. Mission Band, Brotherhood, Wartburg League.

Advent Christian Church — Women's Home and Foreign Mission Society, Young People's Society, and Junior Young People's Society.

Church of the Nazarene — Nazarene Young People's Society, Junior Society, and Nazarene Foreign Missionary Society.







# MAGNIFICENT WHISTLE STOP

THE 100-YEAR STORY  
OF MENDOTA, ILLINOIS

*"Let me know the city, and I will tell  
you about its peoples." —Anon.*

NO MONUMENT ever erected so honestly reflects man as the city in which he lives. In its rise or fall, success or failure is mirrored the collective rise or fall, success or failure of its people.

*Magnificent Whistle Stop* is the lusty story of a lusty city, Mendota, Illinois. Located midway between Chicago and the Great Mississippi to the East and West, and Rockford and Peoria to the North and South, its story is truly representative of a fabulous century, a century in which the heart of our nation developed from a wilderness to a citadel.

But this is no dry recitation of facts. It is alive with action, humor, glitter, romance, disaster and achievement; it runs the whole gamut of human emotion.

Here is the whole story of Mendota, from the first invasion by the Iron Horses of the Burlington and Illinois Central railroads in 1853 to the Centennial Jubilee of 1953.

You'll cringe before the fury of a thundering tornado; watch in helpless shock as your community goes up in smoke before your eyes; laugh as the city council becomes more and more

deeply enmeshed in the Artesian well fiasco; marvel as a hardy people again and again rebuild a city alternately devastated by fire, flood, and storm.

And what people you'll meet! Bold frontiersmen and their calico-dressed belles, gawdy promoters, courageous planners, humble servants of God — they're all here, collaborating in harmony one minute and brawling the next as they carve their monument from the swamps of LaSalle county.

Publication of *Magnificent Whistle Stop* has been the year-long project of Mendota's Centennial Jubilee history committee. It is the work of 75 writers, researchers and editors who invaded all known (and many hitherto unknown) alleys in their quest for the real Mendota story.

On nearly every page of this saga lurks those colorful or whimsical little tales that lend human, living flesh to the bones of solid history. This story, then, is not one for browsing. Bacon in his essay on books said it: "Some few books are to be chewed and digested."

*Magnificent Whistle Stop* is a *must* for the bookshelves of those who live in and about the city or who have been involved in any phase of the growth and commerce of the community.

More than that, however, it is the story of the Great Midwest itself, and a valuable and colorful review of the last 100 years in the agricultural heart of the nation.



MEN





OTA.

1. 1000 ft. 1000 ft. 1000 ft.  
 2. 1000 ft. 1000 ft. 1000 ft.  
 3. 1000 ft. 1000 ft. 1000 ft.  
 4. 1000 ft. 1000 ft. 1000 ft.  
 5. 1000 ft. 1000 ft. 1000 ft.

6. 1000 ft. 1000 ft. 1000 ft.  
 7. 1000 ft. 1000 ft. 1000 ft.  
 8. 1000 ft. 1000 ft. 1000 ft.  
 9. 1000 ft. 1000 ft. 1000 ft.  
 10. 1000 ft. 1000 ft. 1000 ft.

1000 ft. 1000 ft. 1000 ft.



UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS-URBANA

977.327M275

C001

MAGNIFICENT WHISTLE STOP MENDOTA, ILL.



3 0112 025388486